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Just Add Imagination 44

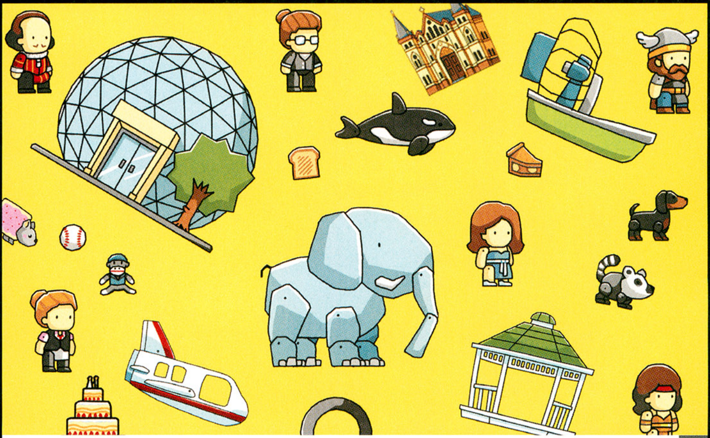
Scribblenauts Unlimited is coming to Wii U, and it's taking the "write anything, solve everything" philosophy to new heights. Check out the exclusive details and creator interviews to find out how!

Girls Just Wanna Have Fun 54

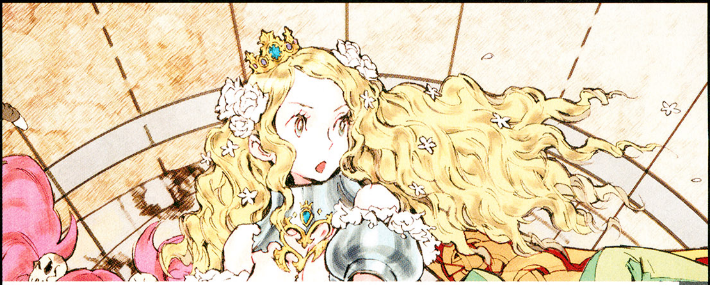
Start with a hack-'n'-slash action game, blend in RPG elements, and top off with a heaping helping of butt-kicking babes—you've got Code of Princess for Nintendo 3DS.

A Pink to the Past 60

Are you ready for maximum pink? Nintendo's lovable round hero is now 20 years old. To celebrate, we look at the upcoming Kirby's Dream Collection: Special Edition for Wii.



SCRIBBLENAUTS UNLIMITED 44



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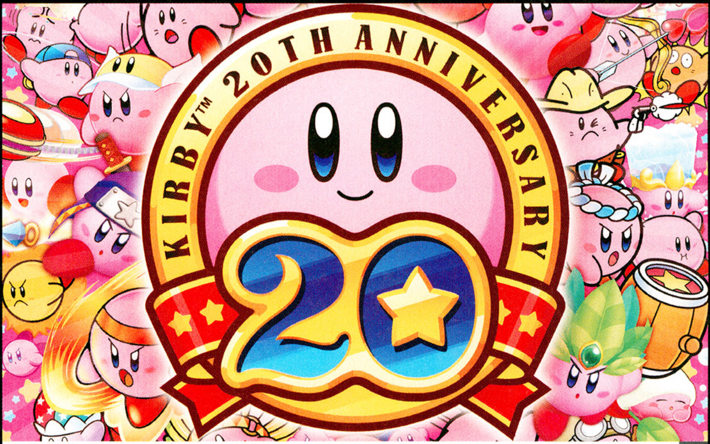

KIRBY'S DREAM COLLECTION: SPECIAL EDITION 60

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"...a black tie, green tunic affair."
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"...a show that would appeal to every possible type of Zelda fan."
- Complex Magazine

"The Legend of Zelda: Symphony of the Goddesses is pure magic."
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DS = NINTENDO DS
DW = DSiWARE
N3DS = NINTENDO 3DS
NES = NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
VC = VIRTUAL CONSOLE
Wii = Wii
Wii U = Wii U
WW = WiiWARE

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IRON MAN 3 Re-booted. Re-suited.
ANTHONY HOPKINS talks Thor 2 and Red 2
THE EXPENDABLES 2
PLUS!
THE BOURNE LEGACY Decoded
RESIDENT EVIL 5 Still kicking ass
KEITH LEMON Is Wolverine. Sort of
Meet the Machete Kills girls • First word: RoboCop • Mila Kunis: not just the pretty girl
The most controversial posters • Soderbergh - sozzled at the Oscars • Alex Zane spouts off
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Spreading the Word

Chris Slate

While Nintendo has always enjoyed a strong following of loyal fans, the company has at times lost ground to competitors that had cooler commercials or trendier types of games. But as we saw with the Wii console, Nintendo is a force to be reckoned with when the unrivaled creativity of its creators is matched with a compelling hook. A top challenge with the Wii U console will be to convey its many benefits to a mass audience. As we saw with the lukewarm reaction to the E3 stage presentation of Nintendo Land—a game that most showgoers enjoyed once they played it—explaining fun can be tricky.

I believe that the concept of Wii U is very easy to understand—on the surface. You only need to see a few quick clips of the GamePad controller in action to "get" dual-screen console gaming. But the real question is whether people will grasp the full value of these new functions. Swinging a Wii Remote controller like a tennis racket was not only easy to understand—it also looked ridiculously fun. The benefits of the GamePad are more nuanced.

Nintendo no doubt has big plans to market Wii U to the masses, but the real work will lie with its loyal fans, the gamers who got friends and family hooked on Wii Sports. So let's spread the word and help ensure that the Wii U launch is a big one!

CHRIS SLATE **EDITOR IN CHIEF**

EXCLUSIVE FIRST LOOK AT ADVENTURE TIME FOR N3DS!

MARIO SOARS AGAIN IN NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. 2

NINTENDO POWER

Nintendo's Next Revolution

We pull back the curtain on the groundbreaking Wii U console and preview its biggest games!

V280 JULY 2012

Greetings, Nintendo fans! This is The Hoff, here to answer your letters from atop my plastic, flying, minty, bearded brontosaurus. Here's this month's special letter request: If there were a real-life Nintendo amusement park, what attractions would you want to see there? Send your responses to the address on page 8.

LETTERS

Lover-Boy Link

I've always been confused about this. Link has gone on so many adventures, and on those adventures he has found girls admiring him, yet he never talks to them. Yeah, there was that time he was engaged to Ruto, but for him that didn't even last that long. What is his problem with the ladies? —**BARKER BILL**

Some gals apparently prefer the strong, silent type, and so far that's been working rather well for Link. He tried it the other way in the old *Legend of Zelda* cartoon by hitting on Zelda every waking moment, and it wasn't pretty.

Don't Have a Cow

I recently went back and replayed Master Quest in The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D, and I've always wondered how the cows got inside of Lord Jabu-Jabu's belly, let alone imbedded within the walls made of his own flesh. Were they feeding him cows instead of fish before the recession took hold? Or is that just a silly assumption? I'm really curious now! —**SAM K.**

Why *wouldn't* Jabu-Jabu be filled with cows? I mean, no offense to the vegetarians out there, but beef is pretty tasty, and if a ginormous fish creature wants to consume a few delicious cows, who's gonna tell him to stop?

Broadened Horizons

Before subscribing to your magazine in February, I considered myself a hardcore gamer. I played Super Smash Bros. Brawl every weekend, I bought The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess the day it came out, and I bought a Nintendo 3DS. But once I read your magazine, I was sort of surprised. Klonoa? Phantasy Star? Mega Man? Castlevania? Final Fantasy? I had no idea what these were. This bumped down my moral status to "below-average gamer." But I guess this is what I subscribed for. —**THEWSCCGATOR12**

Nobody makes great games like Nintendo, but there are a lot of amazing third-party games on Nintendo systems as well. If we're able to introduce you to some of them, that puts smiles on our faces.

In Living Color

I recently got a working Game Boy Color at a garage sale, but I have only two games for it. I was wondering if you could give me any suggestions for really good games. —**ROXASGUY13**

The Legend of Zelda: Oracle of Ages, The Legend of Zelda: Oracle of Seasons, Metal Gear Solid, Wario Land 3, and Mega Man Xtreme 2 are all Game Boy Color exclusives that would be at the top of our list. Shantae is great, too, but it's very hard to obtain.

Suddenly it all makes sense: New Super Mario Bros. 2 has that million-coin goal. Surely Mario's million-coin goal exists because he has a debt to pay off to Tom Nook for some unknown reason. Now I see why Tom Nook was nominated for best villain in some of the Nintendo Power awards years ago! —**DAY DREAMIN' DAVEY**

The Gold Standard

Old-school Mario platforming and a newfound lust for loot meet in **New Super Mario Bros. 2** for the Nintendo 3DS handheld.

IT'S HARD not to feel sorry for Mario. Every week he's out there busting his butt to rescue Princess Peach while squeaking by on a plumber's salary, yet his brother Luigi buys a single haunted mansion and suddenly has more gold than Fort Knox. After seeing Luigi drive by in his emerald-studded Escalade, who can blame poor Mario for crumpling up Bowser's latest ransom note and declaring, "Forget this. It's time to get *paid*!" OK, we don't know if that's the actual story to New Super Mario Bros 2—and it's most likely not. But from what we've seen of the gameplay, it's not a bad guess.

Diabolical Duo

Why do you think Lubba from Super Mario Galaxy 2 is evil when he's perfectly innocent? Actually, Zelda in Skyward Sword is the evil one, always pushing Link off Skyloft and off statues. My evidence is better than yours! —**CO-STAR LUMA**

Who's to say they aren't both evil? Please look forward to Lubba and Zelda teaming up in the near future to try to take over the universe. (Or not.)

Smashing Suggestion

After hearing that the next Super Smash Bros. game(s) would be developed in cooperation with Namco Bandai, I thought, "Wouldn't it be awesome if some characters from Namco Bandai were in the game?" And then the perfect character hit me—Lloyd Irving from Tales of Symphonia for GameCube. Not only is he a memorable character, but his dual-sword fighting style would make him very unique. —**KELLEN M.**

Judging by the response we've seen, you're not the only one interested in having Namco Bandai characters in the game! Check out Writer's Block on page 82 to learn who the NP crew would like to see make guest appearances.

Plumb Crazy

Okay, I really don't get Mario at all. He's supposed to be a plumber, which explains why his Warp Zone is made out of pipes, yet he serves and protects a princess. He throws fireballs, can grow to tremendous (and minute) sizes, and he can overpower a turtle-dragon named Bowser with ease. If anything, he should really be a magic knight, not an overall-wearing, mustachioed plumber! —**ZACHARY W.**

It's true; Mario's officially not a plumber anymore. (Heck, when he started out he was a carpenter.) But are you suggesting that Mario shave off his mustache? Don't even think about it!

Under Cover

Vol. 280 of Nintendo Power had me breathing hard from the moment I saw it. The cover art was from Pikmin 3, the game I'm most waiting for on Wii U, but the article on Pikmin 3 was like half a page. I'm not trying to be offensive, but if it was going to be so short, why put it on the cover? —**ERIC**

Pikmin 3 was put on the subscriber cover to represent all of the upcoming Wii U software. We'll have more Pikmin 3 coverage as soon as we can!

DON'T HASSLE THE HOFF

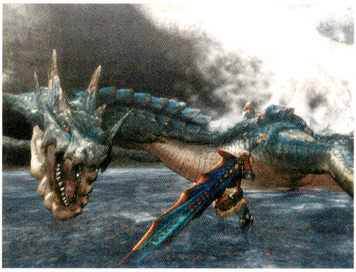
Chris Hoffman, you are the *greatest* person of all time! I worship you and all your Nintendo knowledge. But I have one question. How do you get money on your N3DS for the Nintendo eShop? —**HARLAND K.**

Liquid Hoff says: How dare you make such a misinformed statement!? Clearly I, Liquid Hoff, am the greatest being to walk upon the face of the Earth! My strength and brainpower are without equal! Nations fall before my might! Since you are obviously in dire need of education, I will, in my infinite wisdom and compassion, pass along the knowledge you so desperately yearn for. Adding funds to the eShop is a trivial matter: simply tap the Menu button in the upper-left corner of the touch screen, then touch the Add Funds button. You may then either provide your credit-card information or enter the code from a Nintendo 3DS Prepaid Card that you purchased at a store. Now kneel before me in gratitude and terror!

There Is No Tri

Why, oh why, wasn't Monster Hunter Tri in your Wii Essentials list in Vol. 279? I understand not everyone's tastes are the same, but this is one of the best hardcore franchises that really gets overlooked here in the States. —**MIKE**

We debated this list for a long time, but even after many arguments, fistfights, and danceoffs, some really great games didn't make the cut. We have a lot of love for games such as Monster Hunter Tri, Super Paper Mario, Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn, Wario Land: Shake It!, and Wii Sports Resort—they just didn't quite crack our top 30.



> I gave a massive cry of happiness when I saw the video of Pikmin 3. After all these years of being let down, my dreams finally came true. [Giggles in delight again.]
>
> —**DREW H.**

What did you think of Nintendo's 2012 E3 showing?

I was extremely satisfied with Nintendo's showing at E3 2012. There are so many promising games that were shown! Whether it's a Nintendo mainstay such as New Super Mario Bros., Pikmin, or Paper Mario, or a new, exciting game like Project P-100 or ZombiU, there is plenty to be excited about. Not to mention, there is the Wii U in general to look forward to. Needless to say, it's a great time to be a Nintendo follower! —**RANDY H.**

What did I think of Nintendo's E3 2012 presentation? One word: wow. If I wasn't excited enough about the next generation of Nintendo's home consoles, I am now! The game that stood out the most? ZombiU. I absolutely *love* the concept of when you die, there is no coming back. You move on to another survivor that is fighting against zombies, including your past life. It's such a fresh, new idea. Is it the holiday season yet?!?! I simply cannot wait! —**NOAH H.**

Despite the fact I will probably be one of the first in line to get the Wii U console, I wasn't as impressed with the Big N's presentation this year. I wasn't surprised that they didn't reveal the price or release date; however, they didn't show anything that I wasn't already expecting (except for Nintendo Land) or didn't already know about. Almost everything they showed had already been announced. I would have liked to see something that would have shocked me, and make me think, "Man, I can't believe they're doing that. I'm psyched!" Oh well, still can't wait for this holiday season to come! —**DINO RIKI**

This year's E3 showing was fantastic. The Wii U GamePad and Pro controllers look awesome. Paper Mario: Sticker Star is going to be a great refresher from Super Paper Mario. The two New Super Mario Bros. games will be fantastic. I also noticed that New Super Mario Bros. U's trailer music is a remixed version of the New Super Mario Bros. main theme. Best E3 ever! —**GOLD LUIGI**

I was somewhat less than impressed with this year's E3, but it did have its fair share of good moments. My favorite? Hmm...probably the Just Dance 4 segment, when they brought in the professional dancers and Reggie Fils-Aime was the "puppet master." Put a smile on my face! —**HOLLY F.**

Nintendo's E3 this year was very good. It was awesome, but they showcased Nintendo Land a little too much. So far, the games at the top of my list are Rayman Legends (loved the music level), Batman: Arkham City, and, of course, Nintendo Land and New Super Mario Bros. U. —**RICHARD H.**

I think my favorite part of the E3 showing is the new Scribblenauts for the Wii U. Scribblenauts Unlimited is now making me rethink not getting a Wii U. It is cool to see that you can now make your own items—the possibilities look unlimited. Probably hence the name. —**LEGOLINK8**

I'm excited about trying Nintendo Land. I'm looking forward to trying the inevitable sequel, Nintendo World. But if they ever release a Euro Nintendo Land, I'm skipping it. —**EPIC MARIO**

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Don't send links to game coverage on the Web—trust us; we see it all.

Don't ask about the status of upcoming games, or whether certain games will be announced; if we have that info, we'll always tell you.

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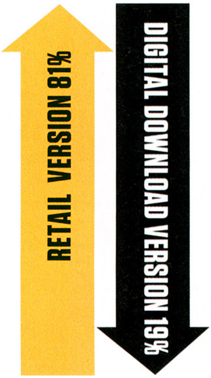

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YES 65%

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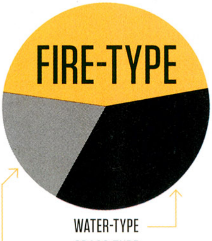

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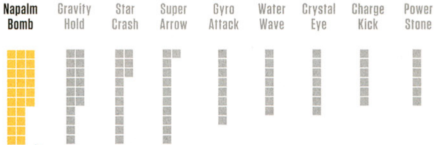

WHICH INCARNATION OF PRINCESS ZELDA DO YOU LIKE BEST?

The Legend of Zelda: **SKYWARD SWORD** 44%

The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 27%

The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker 20%

The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks 9%

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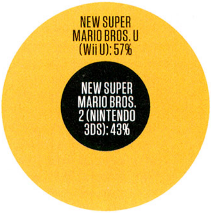

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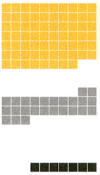

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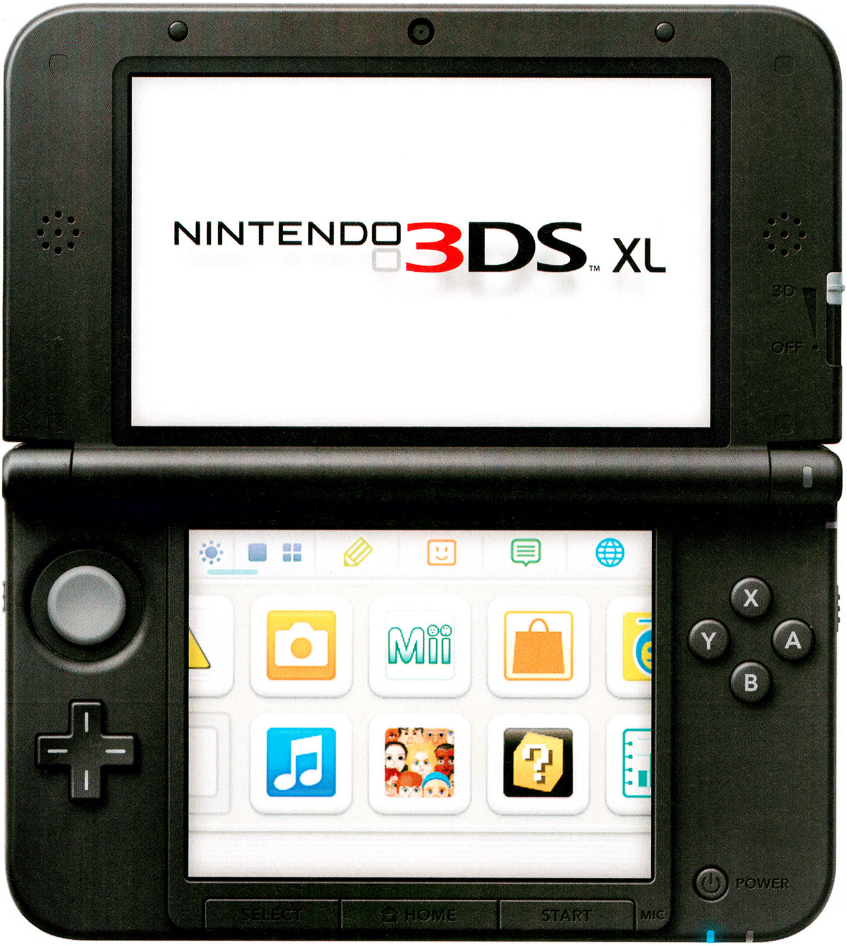
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90% LARGER SCREENS
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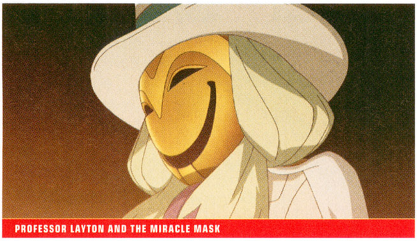
Bigger is Better

Nintendo supersizes its stereoscopic system with the Nintendo 3DS XL handheld.

THE NINTENDO 3DS system is going large; Nintendo 3DS XL was unveiled during a Nintendo Direct broadcast on June 21. (At press time, the video was still viewable at www.nintendo.com/nintendo-direct/archive/06-21-2012.) As you can tell by the actual-size image to the left, the screens on the N3DS XL are, well, extra large. In fact, the surface areas of the screens are about 90% bigger than they are on the standard N3DS. The stereoscopic screen is 4.88" and the touch screen is 4.16", stepping up from the 3.53" and 3.02" of the original system. The more massive overall form factor also gives N3DS XL a longer battery life. Whereas you could expect to play N3DS games for 3-5 hours and DS titles for 5-8 hours on an N3DS-system charge, you can expect 3.5-6.5 hours and 6-10 hours of N3DS and DS playtime, respectively, with this beefier hardware. Included with the system are a 4GB SD card and an AC adaptor (the latter must be purchased separately in Japan and Europe). Nintendo 3DS XL will launch in two colors—red and blue—in North America on August 19 with an MSRP of $199.99. —**JUSTIN C.**

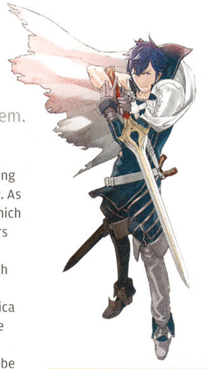
New Games Are on the Way, Too!

In addition to the Nintendo 3DS XL, Nintendo revealed two new upcoming N3DS titles via Nintendo Direct: Professor Layton and the Miracle Mask, and the tentatively titled Fire Emblem.


PROFESSOR LAYTON AND THE MIRACLE MASK

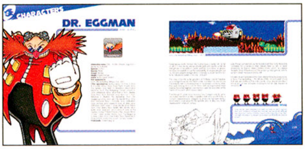
Layton's first N3DS adventure has the professor and his apprentice, Luke, visiting a carnival when things suddenly go awry. As a bonus, over the course of the game (which hits store shelves this November), players will learn about Layton's younger days.

Released in Japan earlier this year with the title Fire Emblem: Awakening, Fire Emblem was announced for North America by Nintendo of America president Reggie Fils-Aime during this year's E3. Now, however, we know the strategy-RPG will be arriving stateside sometime in 2013.


FIRE EMBLEM

3D GAMES

SONIC COLORS


CHARACTERS

DR. EGGMAN

HISTORY

Bonus Zone

INTERVIEW WITH YUJI NAKA

GREEN HILL ZONE

Speed-Reading

Race through 20-plus years of video game lore in *The History of Sonic the Hedgehog*.

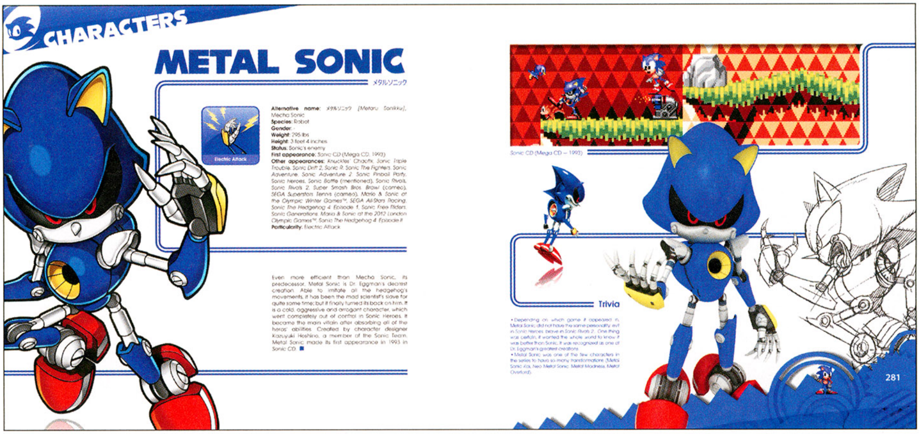
IN TERMS OF UPCOMING GAMES, Sonic fans will have to be content with another trip to the races in the waning months of 2012. But if that's not enough, they'll be able to revisit the Blue Blur's past triumphs—and tragedies—in UDON Entertainment's 300-page opus *The History of Sonic the Hedgehog*. This full-color book covers every game in the Sonic series and every crossover appearance of Sonic the Hedgehog—more than 100 games in all. It also discusses the development history of the franchise, the characters of the Sonic universe, and some of Sonic's extracurricular activities outside of the world of gaming. The story is told through decades worth of official Sonic the Hedgehog artwork, rarely seen concept sketches, and interviews with the series developers.

This handsome hardcover measures 9.25 by 8.25 inches and rings up at a hefty $49.95. It's scheduled to ship in September, so start dusting off an appropriately sized rectangle on your coffee table. —**CASEY L.**

pix'n love EDITIONS

THE HISTORY OF SONIC™ THE HEDGEHOG

©SEGA


CHARACTERS

METAL SONIC

メタルソニック

Electric Attack

Alternative name: *メタルソニック [Metaru Sonikku]*, Mecha Sonic
Species: Robot
Gender: -
Weight: 295 lbs
Height: 3 feet 4 inches
Status: Sonic's enemy
First appearance: *Sonic CD* (Mega CD, 1993)
Other appearances: *Knuckles' Chaotix, Sonic Triple Trouble, Sonic Drift 2, Sonic R, Sonic The Fighters, Sonic Adventure, Sonic Adventure 2, Sonic Pinball Party, Sonic Heroes, Sonic Battle* (mentioned), *Sonic Rivals, Sonic Rivals 2, Super Smash Bros. Brawl* (cameo), *SEGA Superstars Tennis* (cameo), *Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Winter Games™, SEGA All-Stars Racing, Sonic The Hedgehog 4: Episode 1, Sonic Free Riders, Sonic Generations, Mario & Sonic at the 2012 London Olympic Games™, Sonic The Hedgehog 4: Episode II*
Particularity: Electric Attack

Even more efficient than Mecha Sonic, its predecessor, Metal Sonic is Dr. Eggman's dearest creation. Able to imitate all the hedgehog's movements, it has been the mad scientist's slave for quite some time; but it finally turned its back on him. It is a cold, aggressive and arrogant character, which went completely out of control in Sonic Heroes. It became the main villain after absorbing all of the heros' abilities. Created by character designer Kazuyuki Hoshino, a member of the Sonic Team, Metal Sonic made its first appearance in 1993 in *Sonic CD*. ■

Sonic CD (Mega CD – 1993)

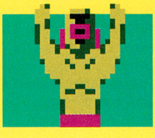
Trivia

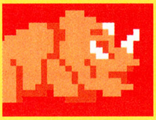
- Depending on which game it appeared in, Metal Sonic did not have the same personality: evil in *Sonic Heroes*, brave in *Sonic Rivals 2*... One thing was certain, it wanted the whole world to know it was better than Sonic. It was recognized as one of Dr. Eggman's greatest creations.
- Metal Sonic was one of the few characters in the series to have so many transformations (Metal Sonic Kai, Neo Metal Sonic, Metal Madness, Metal Overlord).

281

A WINNER IS...

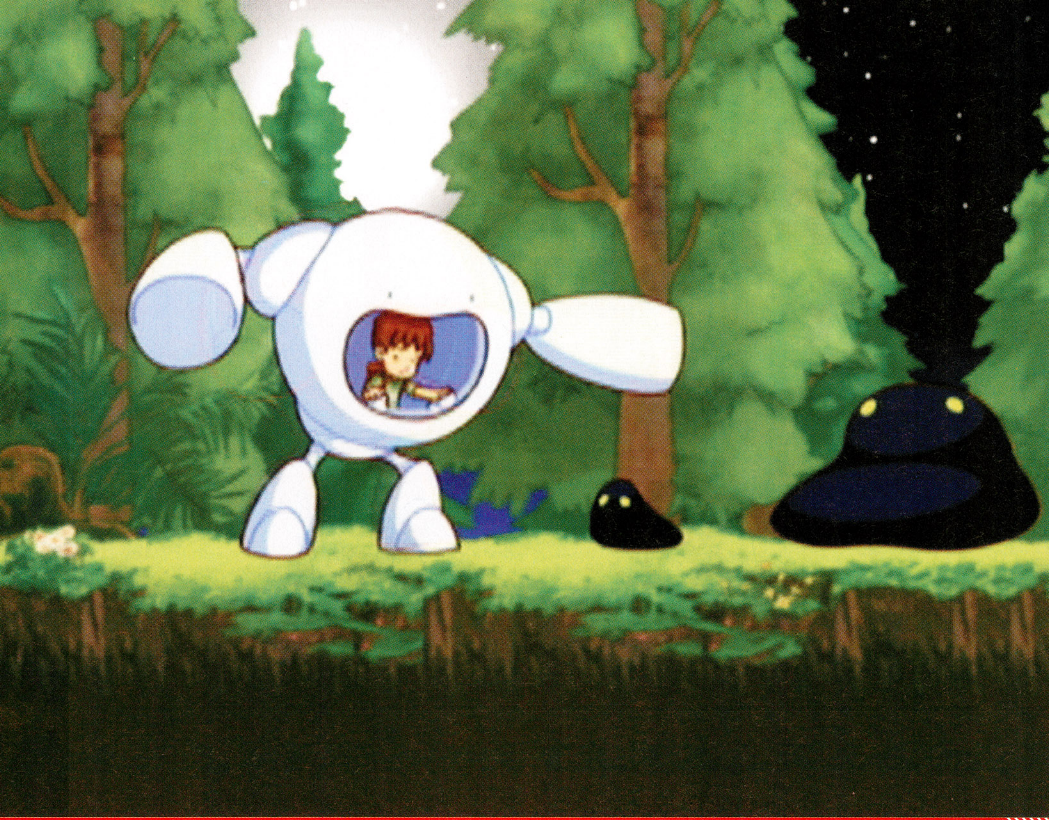
Gamers who like extra-large handheld screens.





DODONGO DISLIKES...

Fighting the same super-cheap end boss 12 times.



THAT WAS AWESOME!

OUR FAVORITE VIDEO GAME MOMENTS

MECHA-BLOB

A BOY AND HIS BLOB, Wii, 2009

"Just when you seem the most helpless, the blob reveals his ultimate transformation: a mech suit. Suddenly you go from being on the defensive to feeling totally empowered. It's amazingly satisfying." —**CHRIS H.**

STAR POWER

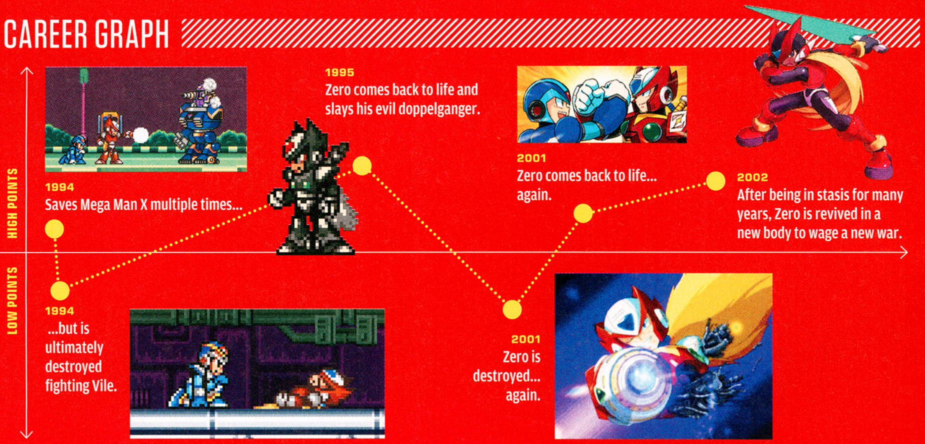
A closer look at the characters we love

Zero

FIRST APPEARANCE:
MEGA MAN X
SUPER NES, 1994

You can't keep a good robot down. No matter the odds, Mega Man X's best friend is ready to fight the good fight.

CAREER GRAPH



1994
Saves Mega Man X multiple times...

1994
...but is ultimately destroyed fighting Vile.

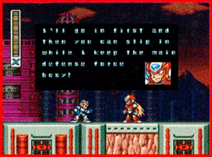
1995
Zero comes back to life and slays his evil doppelganger.

2001
Zero is destroyed... again.

2001
Zero comes back to life... again.

2002
After being in stasis for many years, Zero is revived in a new body to wage a new war.

OUR FAVORITE ZERO GAMES



I'll go in first and then you can slip in while I keep the main defense force busy!

Mega Man X

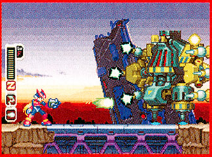
SUPER NES, 1994

Mega Man X isn't just the game that introduced Zero; it's the game that reinvented Mega Man. New play mechanics such as dashing and wall-jumping update the gameplay, while Zero, as a nonplayable supporting character, adds a strong narrative element.

Mega Man X3

SUPER NES, 1996

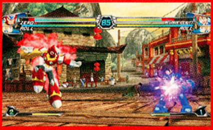
Building upon the established Mega Man X formula, X3 delivers a new assortment of Mavericks to fight and armor upgrades to collect, along with rock-solid gameplay. Zero becomes playable for the first time in this game, although he isn't nearly as versatile as X.



Mega Man Zero 2

GAME BOY ADVANCE, 2003

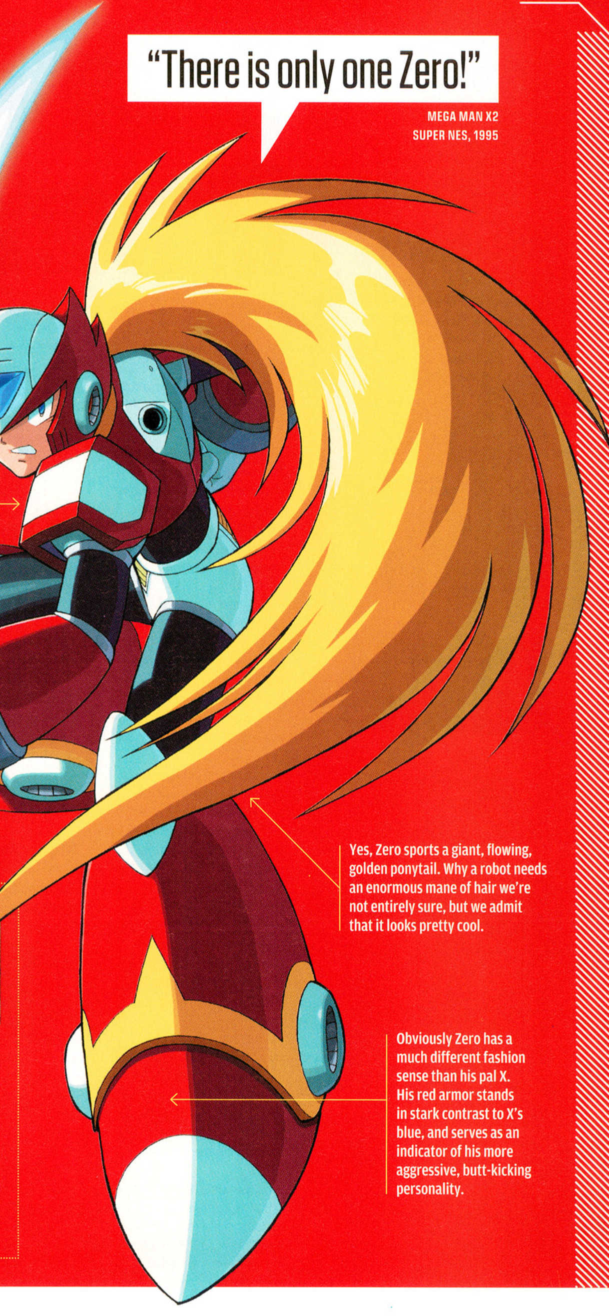
Set quite some time after the Mega Man X series, the Mega Man Zero titles let a redesigned Zero step into the spotlight. Mega Man Zero 2 is arguably the best title in the series thanks to amazing intensity, extremely precise action, and a satisfying challenge level.



Tatsunoko vs. Capcom: Ultimate All-Stars

Wii, 2010

Pitting Capcom superstars against famous anime characters, Tatsunoko vs. Capcom is a high-octane tag-team-fighting extravaganza. Armed with impressive speed and relentless saber attacks, Zero proves himself to be a more-than-worthy competitor. Other Mega Man characters—Roll and Mega Man Volnutt—also join in on the fun.



“There is only one Zero!”

MEGA MAN X2
SUPER NES, 1995

The Z-Saber is Zero’s trademark weapon, which he frequently uses to cleave foes in two. Unlike his ally Mega Man X, who specializes in ranged attacks, Zero prefers up-close-and-personal melee combat.

This blue emblem in Zero’s forehead might be his weak spot. When Zero was initially activated he went berserk, and only a blow to this spot was able to bring him to his senses. The emblem has briefly displayed a W, possibly an allusion to Zero’s past.

When Zero debuted he had rounded shoulders, but when he was revived during the events of Mega Man X2 he came back sporting these angular shoulder pads. What’s the significance? Only Zero and the designers at Capcom know for sure.

Even though Zero is best known for his swordsmanship, he can also transform his hand into a Z-Buster to blast enemies from afar. Zero can charge up his shots to unleash blasts of varying degrees of power.

Yes, Zero sports a giant, flowing, golden ponytail. Why a robot needs an enormous mane of hair we’re not entirely sure, but we admit that it looks pretty cool.

Obviously Zero has a much different fashion sense than his pal X. His red armor stands in stark contrast to X’s blue, and serves as an indicator of his more aggressive, butt-kicking personality.

FROM THE MIND OF A MADMAN

So who is Zero? Where does he come from? Whereas Mega Man X was built by Dr. Light (creator of the original Mega Man), Zero’s origins have never been fully explained. The games have heavily implied, however, that Zero is the product of none other than Mega Man’s archenemy, Dr. Wily. In Mega Man X2, the evil Sigma states that Zero is the “last...of the doctor’s creations,” and Zero has frequently had dreams of a silhouetted character that looks suspiciously like Wily. During Zero’s ending in Tatsunoko vs. Capcom, the mysterious character addresses Zero as “my son.”

NEW SKYLANDER!

Ice to See You

Every month, we're exclusively revealing a new character from Skylanders Giants, which is heading to Wii, Nintendo 3DS, and Wii U later this year.
Up next: Chill

Chill

Element: Water
Bio: Chill was the sworn guardian and personal protector of the Snow Queen. As captain of the queen's guard, her many heroic deeds had earned her the respect of the entire Ice Kingdom. But when the Cyclops army began to expand their empire into the northern realms, the Snow Queen was taken prisoner during her watch, and Chill has never forgiven herself for letting it happen. Ashamed and embarrassed, she left the Ice Kingdom behind and swore never to return until she could reclaim her honor. Now as a member of the Skylanders, she remains courageous and strong, while always on the lookout for her lost queen.

Championship Material

World Heavyweight Champion Sheamus puts the spotlight on WWE '13 for Wii.

Publisher THQ has been delivering hard-hitting wrestling simulations on an annual basis for more than a decade, and their latest effort, WWE '13, will be arriving on the Wii console this fall. We're still waiting the see the game in action, but in the meantime, we had a chance to talk to WWE World Heavyweight Champion Sheamus about what he's looking forward to in this year's edition. —CHRIS H.

NINTENDO POWER WWE Champion CM Punk is on the cover of the game this year, not you. Why is that?
SHEAMUS [Laughs] I think everyone is trying to start a row between me and Punk about the video game! There's always next year for me, but to be honest with you, I'm actually really excited about this game, WWE '13.... It's a great sign, too, for all us new superstars coming through the ranks and setting the company in a new direction.

What are you going to do to ensure that you're on the cover of next year's game?
Well, I've already politicked my way to THQ, and I've already talked to 'em so that the next potential list of people for the cover of WWE '14 will be sent to me. So when I find out who they are, I will Brogue Kick them off, one by one, and do my damnedest to make sure that nobody else beats me for that cover.

Have you already recorded voiceovers for WWE '13?
I haven't recorded any voices for this year's game, but I can say that the audio for this game is off the charts.

What else has impressed you about the game?
I actually had a chance to play it earlier on, and the graphics are even better than '12, which I thought would be definitely hard to top. The gameplay is slicker. It's even better. The arenas are all up-to-date; the arenas are better. The Attitude Campaign is phenomenal, and I'm very, very excited about that.

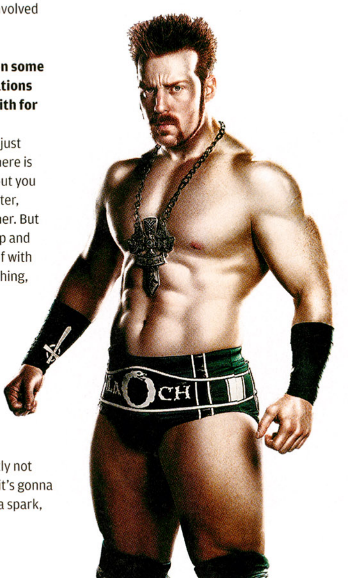
If you could find your character in any story in WWE '13, what would it be?
Personally, [I'd want] to relive the storyline of when WWE entered the Attitude Era—that was a great, exciting time. The Montreal Screwjob, to me, really was the moment when everything just blew up in WWE. On the outside it was seen as anarchy and chaos and complete dysfunction going on... and I think being around that era, having Sheamus involved there, would be a lot of fun.

What are your thoughts on some of the creative interpretations that fans have come up with for your theme-song lyrics?
[Laughs] I think it's great! It just shows how much interest there is there. If they don't care about you or your song or your character, then they're not gonna bother. But the fact that people come up and [show me] pictures of myself with a lobster head... Shameful thing, lobster head, too many limes—I've seen them all. They definitely all come into play.

What do you think about THQ maybe giving you a lobster head as a bonus outfit?
Hmm, you know, I'm honestly not sure how many man-hours it's gonna take or interest that's gonna spark, but maybe down the road there can be an option for the home user to create a lobster head. Or maybe you can just stick something on the TV—a sticker or something for when you press pause. You're fascinated by the lobster heads. Are you a lobster fan? Big seafood fan or something?

Not really. I'm more into limes.
Limes are good. Especially with water.

Changing subjects, what Nintendo character are you most like?
Wow. I don't think Sheamus is like anybody. I think that's what makes me unique; that's what makes me stand out in the WWE Universe. I've tried to create something that's different, something that's never ever been seen. If I was in the Nintendo universe, I'd like Sheamus to be the only one of his kind.
[Editor's note: The correct answer is Bowser.]



SONIC 4!
CONDUIT 2
MARIO ROCKS!
SUPER REVIEW!
YEAR OF THE MOUSE!
NINTENDO 3DS
METROID MANIA
GIANT REVIEWS
SONIC COLORS FIRST REVIEW!
GREAT APE!
MARIO SPORTS MIX
ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL!
NINTENDO POWER
26-PAGE TRIBUTE
We salute the games, controllers, codes, and even the boxes behind the system that started it all!

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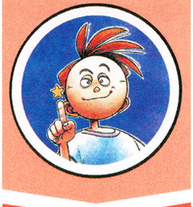
POWER QUIZ

EASY

What is the name of the teenage cartoon character who served as Nintendo Power's mascot during the magazine's early days?



AVERAGE

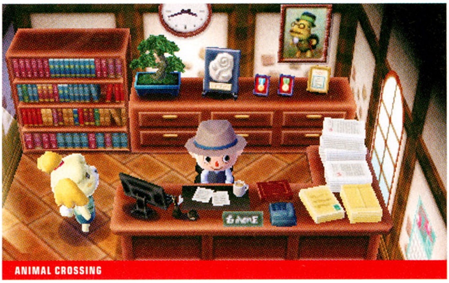
What game was featured on the cover of the very first issue of Nintendo Power?

HARDCORE

What was the first title to win the Game of the Year award in Nintendo Power?

ANSWERS

EASY: Nester; AVERAGE: Super Mario Bros. 2; HARDCORE: Zelda II: The Adventure of Link



ANIMAL CROSSING

Crossing Seasons

NEWS *from* JAPAN

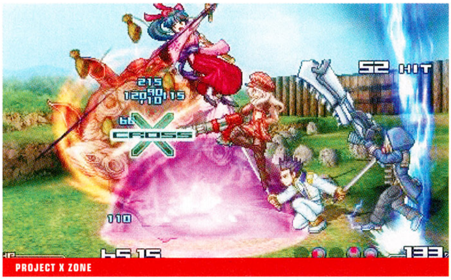
A new **Animal Crossing** title headlines a Nintendo 3DS holiday slate in Japan packed with ambitious titles.

SWELTERING HEAT, HIGH humidity, and a relentless series of typhoons are combining to form another dreadful Japanese summer. But the thoughts of game-industry executives have already turned to the fall and winter to come, when the year's biggest games will battle for consumers' precious holiday dollars.

Leading the N3DS pack is Nintendo's newest Animal Crossing release, which has an intriguing Japanese title that translates to something like Animal Crossing: Get Going! The main theme of this installment is customization; players can now personalize their characters by assembling a wardrobe of clothing options, and can change the exteriors of their homes as well as the interiors. And since players now serve as the mayor of their towns, they can individualize their communities, as well, by acquiring and placing infrastructure objects like bridges, lampposts, and benches. Nintendo hasn't spelled out the connectivity features of the game yet, but is promising some sort of four-player wireless functionality. A Japanese release is expected by year's end.

A lot of N3DS-owning RPG fans will be calling in sick on October 11, when two of the year's biggest RPG releases are set to arrive. Square Enix's conventional fantasy RPG Bravely Default: Flying Fairy will face stiff competition from Project X Zone, the Banpresto strategy RPG that features two-man teams composed of nearly 200 different characters from Capcom, Sega, and Namco's most popular games. Both titles may face still more competition from the as-yet-undated Shin Megami Tensei IV, the first numbered entry in the core series of Atlus's popular MegaTen franchise since 2003. Little has been revealed about the game at this point: Atlus seems to be playing it hush-hush in order to sell a few extra copies of Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Summoner, a series spin-off that's being remade for the Nintendo 3DS handheld, and will be packed with the first trailer for SMTIV. All we know is that SMTIV's main visual juxtaposes a traditional swords-and-sorcery fantasy world with a dingy, modern urban landscape, suggesting that the game will be injecting some old-school fantasy flavor into the series's traditional modern-world setting.

Finally, Level-5 announced a sequel to its omnibus game collection Guild 01 before the first installment even hit store shelves—which did nothing to stop Guild 01 from bombing at retail. But since the sequel is well under way, it'll probably be released all the same. Like its predecessor, Guild 02 features four games developed by noted creators—including Mega Man creator and former Capcom executive Keiji Inafune, who's developing a tank-vs.-giant bugs action game simply titled Bug Tank. Additionally, a team that worked on several of Chunsoft's famous visual novels is making a suspense adventure game titled Alone, while Kazu Ayabe—the creator of the popular (but never localized) My Summer Vacation series—is developing an adventure game set in the 1940s titled Monsters Appear on Fridays. The fourth developer has yet to be announced. **—CASEY L.**

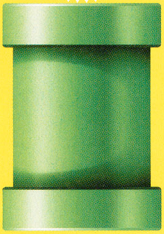


PROJECT X ZONE

WARP ZONE

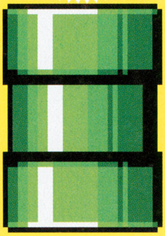
What we were writing about way back when

5 YEARS AGO



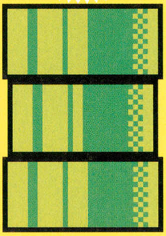
The August 2007 issue of Nintendo Power sent retro-action fans into fits of excitement with a world-exclusive reveal of Contra 4 for Nintendo DS. The article detailed Contra's return to its 2D roots and provided a look at the game's early levels, which consisted of an explosive trek through the jungle, a fight through an alien base, and a harrowing journey up a waterfall that culminated in a grueling boss battle. Sadly, the game's intended four-player mode never made it into the final product. OK, Konami; when the heck are we gonna see Contra 5?

10 YEARS AGO



Believe it or not, 10 years ago North American gamers had yet to enter the wide world of Animal Crossing. Luckily, Nintendo Power was there to show everyone the joys of earning bells, making animal friends, and visiting other villagers' towns with a feature in the August 2002 issue. The magazine also contained plenty of Disney magic: multipage articles on Disney's Magical Mirror Starring Mickey Mouse (for GameCube) and the Game Boy Advance version of 16-bit classic Disney's Magical Quest Starring Mickey and Minnie.

20 YEARS AGO



Nintendo Power Library Reference Copy
NINTENDO POWER
MARIO PAINT
Music, Moves and Masterpieces
THE SOURCE FOR NEWS AND STRATEGIES STRAIGHT FROM THE PROS

It wasn't the usual type of game that people expected to see from Nintendo back in 1992, but innovative Super NES drawing title Mario Paint was more than worthy of the honor of appearing on the cover of Nintendo Power Vol. 39. The issue contained coverage of several other all-time greats as well, including Kirby's Dream Land (the very first Kirby game) for Game Boy, and the fantastic co-op beat-'em-up Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles IV: Turtles in Time for Super NES (which was even better than the arcade version).

ULTIMATE CARD GAMES
11 Classic Games Hearts • Spades Euchre • Canasta Bridge • more
20 Solitaire Games FreeCell • Klondike Golf • Yukon • Spider Pyramid • many more
13 Casino Games Texas Hold'em • Double Flop Hold'em 5-Card Draw • 7-Card Stud • BlackJack Crazy Pineapple • 5 Video Poker • more
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202 Solitaire
303 Tangram
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COLLECTOR'S CORNER

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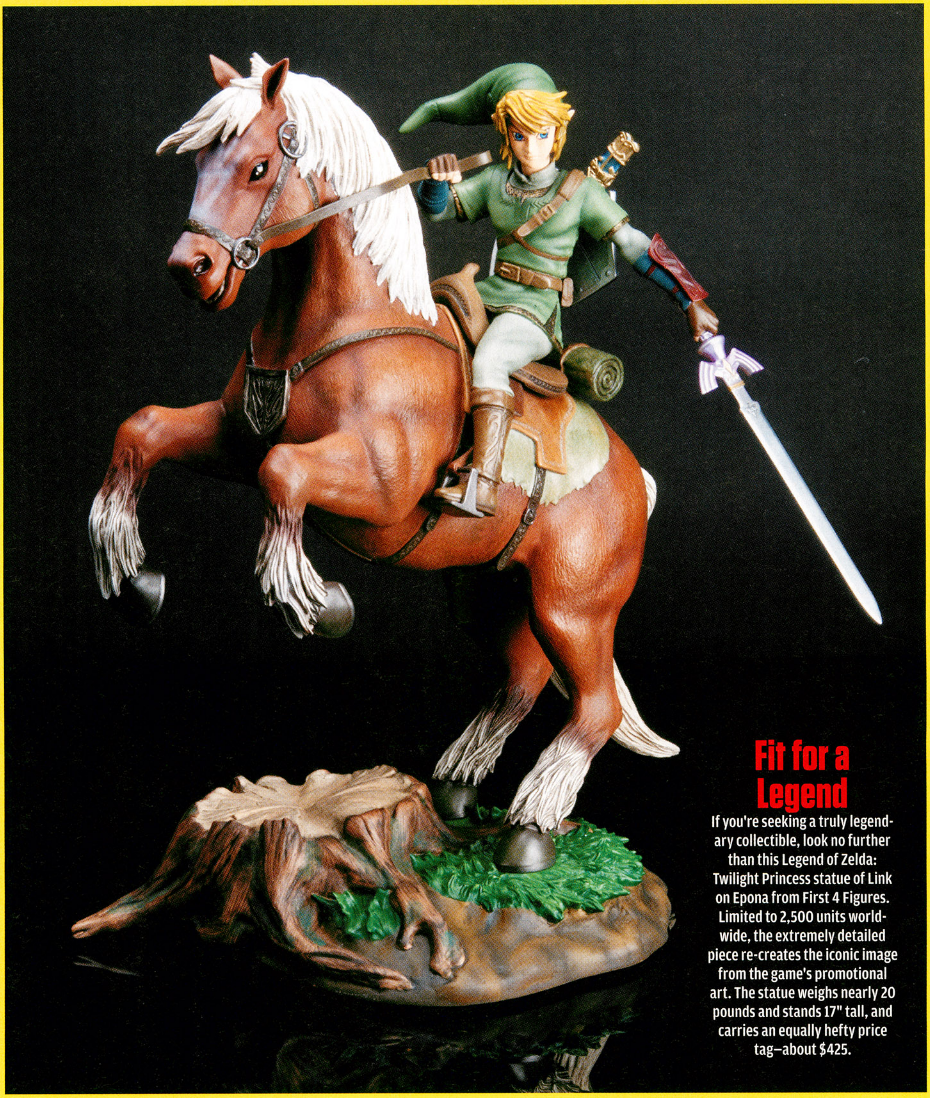

Fit for a Legend

If you're seeking a truly legendary collectible, look no further than this Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess statue of Link on Epona from First 4 Figures. Limited to 2,500 units worldwide, the extremely detailed piece re-creates the iconic image from the game's promotional art. The statue weighs nearly 20 pounds and stands 17" tall, and carries an equally hefty price tag—about $425.

GAME FORECAST

NINTENDO 3DS

50 Classic Games	Maximum	10/12
Adventure Time: Hey Ice King! Why'd You Steal Our Garbage?!	D3	FALL 12
Angler's Club: Ultimate Bass Fishing 3D	D3	2012
Animal Crossing*	Nintendo	TBA
Ben 10: Omniverse	D3	FALL 12
Boulder Dash-XL 3D	Giant	TBA
Castlevania: Lords of Shadow—Mirror of Fate	Konami	FALL 12
Classic Games Overload: Card and Puzzle Edition	Telegames	11/12
Code of Princess	Atlus	FALL 12
Contra*	Konami	TBA
Disney Epic Mickey: Power of Illusion	Disney	FALL 12
Disney Pixar Finding Nemo	Disney	9/12
Disney Princess: My Fairytale Adventure	Disney	9/12
Etrian Odyssey IV	Atlus	TBA
Fire Emblem*	Nintendo	2013
Harvest Moon: A New Beginning	Natsume	Q4 2012
Hello Kitty Picnic	Majesco	10/12
Hotel Transylvania	GameMill	9/12
Imagine Babyz	Ubisoft	10/12
Imagine Fashion Life	Ubisoft	10/12
Jett Tailfin	Maximum	11/12
Junior Classic Games	Maximum	10/12
LEGO City: Undercover*	Nintendo	TBA
LEGO The Lord of the Rings: The Video Game	Warner Bros.	FALL 12
Luigi's Mansion: Dark Moon	Nintendo	HOL 12
Mahjong 3D: Warriors of the Emperor	Giant	TBA
Moshi Monsters Moshlings Theme Park	Activision	10/12
NCIS 3D	Ubisoft	9/12
Ninja Gaiden*	Tecmo Koei	TBA
Old Skool Classics	Storm City	9/12
Outdoors Unleashed: Africa 3D	Mastiff	2012
Outdoors Unleashed: Alaska 3D	Mastiff	2012
Paper Mario: Sticker Star	Nintendo	HOL 12
Petz Countryside	Ubisoft	11/12
Professor Layton and the Miracle Mask	Nintendo	11/12
Rabbids Rumble	Ubisoft	11/12
Rise of the Guardians: The Video Game	D3	11/12
Scribblenauts Unlimited	Warner Bros.	HOL 12
Skylanders Giants	Activision	FALL 12
Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed	Sega	HOL 12
Spy Hunter	Warner Bros.	FALL 12
Super Black Bass	Rising Star	9/12
Super Smash Bros.*	Nintendo	TBA
Transformers: Prime—The Game	Activision	10/12
Virtue's Last Reward	Aksys	FALL 12
Wipeout 3	Activision	FALL 12
Word Wizard 3D	Storm City	9/12
Wreck-It Ralph	Activision	FALL 12

Wii

Ben 10: Omniverse	D3	FALL 12
Big Time Rush	GameMill	11/12
Deer Drive Legends	Maximum	9/12
Disney Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Two	Disney	11/12
Disney Princess: My Fairytale Adventure	Disney	9/12
Harley Pasternak's Hollywood Workout	Majesco	10/12
I Spy Game Pack	Scholastic	9/12
Just Dance 4	Ubisoft	10/12
Just Dance: Disney Party	Ubisoft	10/12
Karaoke Joysound	Konami	2012
Kirby's Dream Collection Special Edition	Nintendo	9/12
LEGO The Lord of the Rings: The Video Game	Warner Bros.	FALL 12
Monster High Skultimate Roller Maze	Little Orbit	HOL 12
NBA 2K13	2K Sports	10/12
Nickelodeon Dance 2	2K Play	11/12
Rise of the Guardians: The Video Game	D3	11/12
Skylanders Giants	Activision	FALL 12
Transformers: Prime—The Game	Activision	10/12
Victorious: Taking the Lead	D3	FALL 12
Wipeout 3	Activision	FALL 12
Wreck-It Ralph	Activision	FALL 12
WWE '13	THQ	10/12
Young Justice: Legacy	Little Orbit	2013
Zumba Fitness Core	Majesco	10/12

Wii U

Aliens: Colonial Marines	Sega	TBA
Assassin's Creed III	Ubisoft	HOL 12
Batman: Arkham City—Armored Edition	Warner Bros.	HOL 12
Ben 10: Omniverse	D3	HOL 12
Darksiders II	THQ	HOL 12
Family Party: 30 Great Games*	D3	HOL 12
Game & Wario*	Nintendo	TBA
Injustice: Gods Among Us	Warner Bros.	TBA
Jett Tailfin	Maximum	HOL 12
Just Dance 4	Ubisoft	HOL 12
LEGO City: Undercover	Nintendo	HOL 12
Marvel's Avengers: Battle for Earth	Ubisoft	HOL 12
Mass Effect 3	Electronic Arts	HOL 12
NBA 2K13	2K Sports	HOL 12
New Super Mario Bros. U	Nintendo	HOL 12
Ninja Gaiden 3: Razor's Edge	Nintendo	HOL 12
Nintendo Land	Nintendo	HOL 12
Pikmin 3	Nintendo	TBA
Project P-100*	Nintendo	TBA
Rabbids Land	Ubisoft	HOL 12
Rayman Legends	Ubisoft	TBA
Rise of the Guardians: The Video Game	D3	HOL 12
Scribblenauts Unlimited	Warner Bros.	HOL 12
SiNG*	Nintendo	HOL 12
Skylanders Giants	Activision	TBA
Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed	Sega	HOL 12
Sports Connection	Ubisoft	HOL 12
Super Smash Bros.*	Nintendo	TBA
Tank! Tank! Tank!	Namco Bandai	HOL 12
Tekken Tag Tournament 2*	Namco Bandai	HOL 12
Wii Fit U	Nintendo	TBA
Wii U Panorama View*	Nintendo	HOL 12
Your Shape: Fitness Evolved 2013	Ubisoft	HOL 12
ZombiU	Ubisoft	HOL 12

NINTENDO DS

Adventure Time: Hey Ice King! Why'd You Steal Our Garbage?!	D3	FALL 12
LEGO The Lord of the Rings: The Video Game	Warner Bros.	FALL 12
Monster High Skultimate Roller Maze	Little Orbit	HOL 12
Pokémon Black Version 2	Nintendo	10/12
Pokémon White Version 2	Nintendo	10/12
Transformers: Prime—The Game	Activision	FALL 12
Victorious: Taking the Lead	D3	HOL 12
Winx Club: Magical Fairy Party	D3	HOL 12
Wreck-It Ralph	Activision	FALL 12
Young Justice: Legacy	Little Orbit	2013

READERS' MOST WANTED

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www.nintendopower.com/polls

NINTENDO 3DS

1. New Super Mario Bros. 2
2. Luigi's Mansion: Dark Moon
3. Paper Mario: Sticker Star
4. Fire Emblem*
5. Animal Crossing*

Wii

1. Kirby's Dream Collection Special Edition
2. The Last Story
3. Disney Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Two
4. LEGO The Lord of the Rings: The Video Game
5. Skylanders Giants

Wii U

1. New Super Mario Bros. U
2. Pikmin 3
3. Nintendo Land
4. Rayman Legends
5. Game & Wario

RED TEXT = GAMES ADDED THIS MONTH. * TENTATIVE TITLE **NOTE:** RELEASE DATES OFTEN CHANGE. ALL NINTENDO 3DS SCREENSHOTS HAVE BEEN CAPTURED IN 2D MODE.

DOWNLOAD

IN THIS SECTION

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Trine 2: Director's Cut

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MAD DOG MCCREE

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FLIP THE CORE

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SAVE THE FURRIES

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DOUBLE DRAGON II: THE REVENGE
THE LAST BLADE
MEGA MAN X2

Third Trine's the Charm

The Wii U exclusive Trine 2: Director's Cut features more high-fantasy puzzle-solving than you can conjure a plank at.

NINTENDO FANS CAN be forgiven for not following the Trine series, as the previous two entries have somehow managed to ship on five different platforms without ever gracing a piece of Nintendo hardware. (The developers even made versions for Linux-based computers—who knew Linux still existed?) But now our patience is finally paying off; Wii U will be the exclusive host of Trine 2: Director's Cut, an enhanced and expanded version of the series's most recent and well-received release. With the addition of a new six-level expansion-pack campaign, a Wii U-exclusive four-player mode, and plenty of miscellaenous upgrades, series creator Lauri Hyvärinen promises that the director's cut adds "at least 27% more awesomeness." Suck on *that*, Linux users!

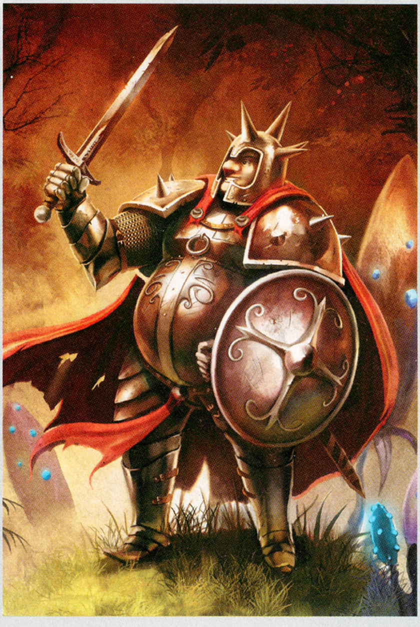
THE TRINE OF THEIR LIVES

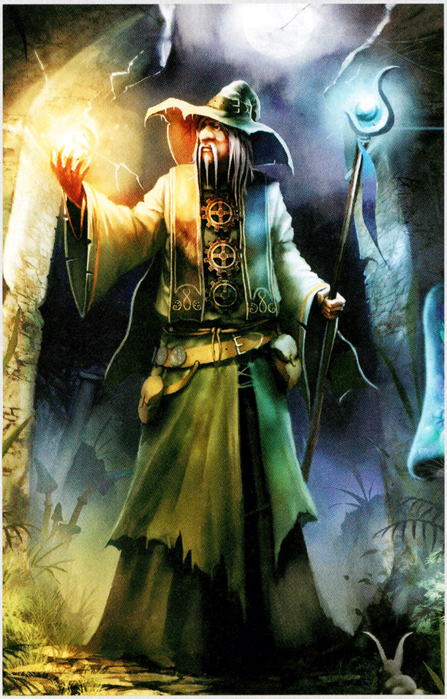
If you haven't played the original Trine, don't let that hold you back—even Hyvärinen suggests players "just skip it," noting that Trine 2 is actually easier to get into than its less user-friendly predecessor.

Here's all you need to know about the story: The Trine series stars a trio of heroes whose souls have been bonded together by a mysterious artifact known as the Trine. That means only one of the heroes can exist at a time, forcing players to switch between them to take advantage of their unique talents. (This premise is promptly abandoned in the game's local or online co-op mode, where each player can simultaneously control a different character.) The thief Zoya can sneak past foes, use arrows to hit distant targets, and throw a grappling hook to propel herself to the higher reaches of the game's environments. The knight Pontius carries a small arsenal that includes a sword for slaying foes, a sledgehammer for rearranging terrain, and a shield for bouncing enemy projectiles back at their sender. Finally, the wizard Amadeus can conjure blocks and planks, and use his powers of telekinesis to arrange objects into bridges, staircases, and barriers—or just to pick up enemies and toss them into spike-filled pits.

There are plenty of dragons to shoot and goblins to slay, but the Trine series is mostly about solving puzzles. After every few steps you take through the game's colorful world, you'll encounter a treasure that's just out of reach or an obsta-

[Right] Despite his girth, paunchy Pontious can soar like an eagle in Trine 2: Director's Cut. Or at least, kinda glide like a fat albatross in plate mail.

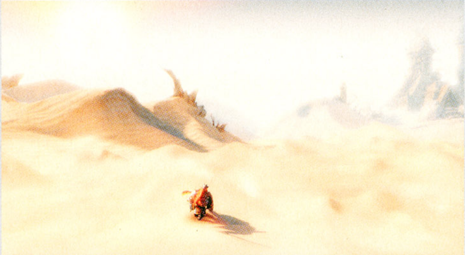




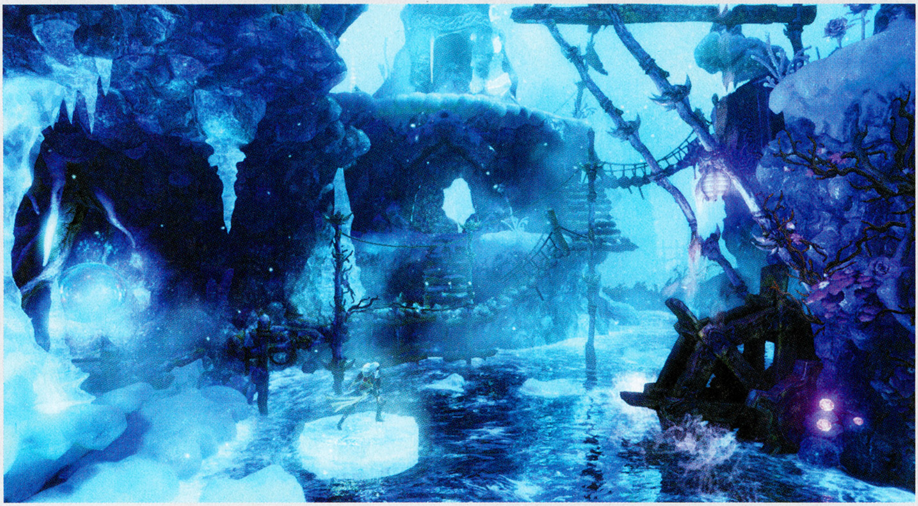
cle that needs to be surmounted, and only a combination of your heroes' dispirate abilities will do the trick. The solutions can be as simple as having Amadeus telekinetically impale a crate onto some ceiling spikes to give Zoya a platform to grapple onto, or as complicated as having Pontius smash through walls to gather pieces of pipe, which Amadeus can shape into a tube to move heat from a jet of fire to the underside of a cauldron, causing the water to boil and generate giant bubbles that your heroes can ride to their goal. The beauty of the Trine series is that there don't seem to be predetermined solutions; the game has a robust physics system that lends itself to all sorts of crafty possibilities. As players collect skill points from hidden treasures, they can buy new abilities from their characters' skill trees, enabling additional puzzle-solving tactics. Solving puzzles is always satisfying, but with its open-ended mechanics, the Trine series also provides the gratifying sensation that you've somehow cheated the game by using abilities you weren't supposed to have, and in ways the developers never intended.

IN THE FULLNESS OF TRINE

Finnish Developer Frozenbyte has been working on the director's cut since autumn 2011, when a meeting with Nintendo left all parties agreeing that the game would be a good fit for the Wii U console. "Obviously, the controller is yet again something unique and awesome," says Hyvärinen, explaining the system's appeal. "The game has a lot of depth and complexity...and the touch screen certainly makes many actions very intuitive, such as the wizard's magic spells. You can just draw a square



[Right] The creators are especially proud of the visual effects in the new expansion-pack levels, such as the rippling heat waves in this desert.



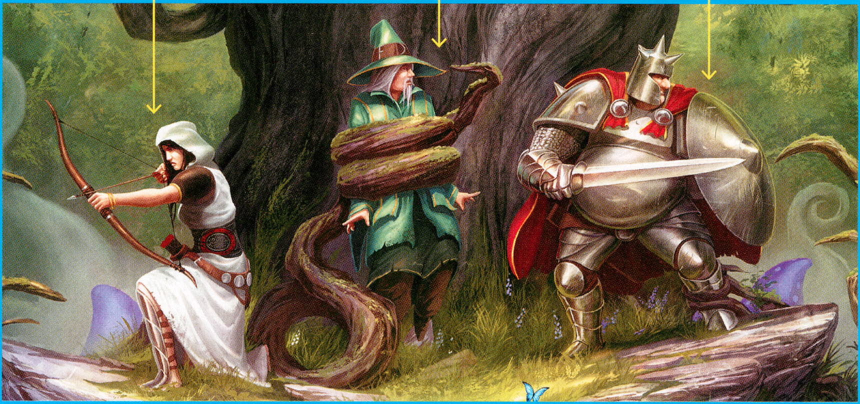
NEW TOYS FOR CUNNING PLOYS

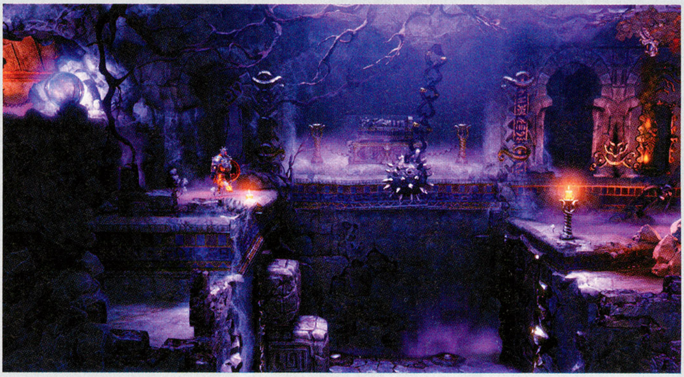
The as-yet-untitled expansion pack that comes with Trine 2: Director's Cut offers a new array of character abilities that are also being retroactively added to the game's main campaign.

Zoya the Thief Defying gravity has always been a passion of Zoya's, making her the obvious choice as point woman for the expansion pack's new gravity mechanics. For example, her new low-gravity arrow can shoot holes through the laws of physics, making objects or characters float higher than normal.

Amadeus the Wizard Amadeus has always hogged the puzzle-solving spotlight, so the developers seem to be giving most of the tricky new abilities to his comrades. In exchange, Amadeus will get to suck a little bit less when trying to survive hordes of incoming goblins, thanks to a new skill that allows him to trap enemies by conjuring boxes around them.

Pontius the Knight Ever wonder why those giant angular shields are called "kite shields"? It's not because the shields let you fly like a kite, but Pontius doesn't seem to realize that, and his new ability to glide with a shield is so valuable that no one has bothered to clue him in. Pontius will also be able to magnetize his shield, making him a key player in many of the game's new puzzles.



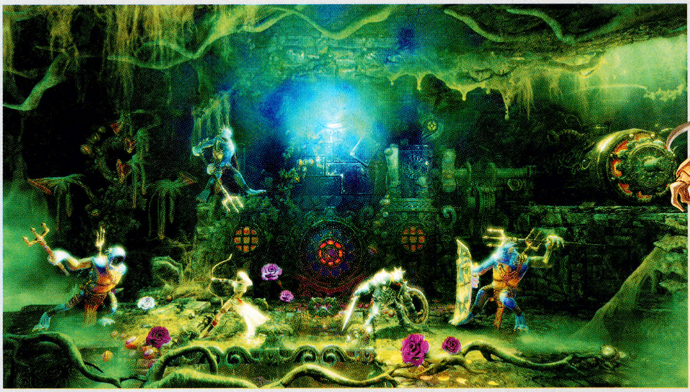


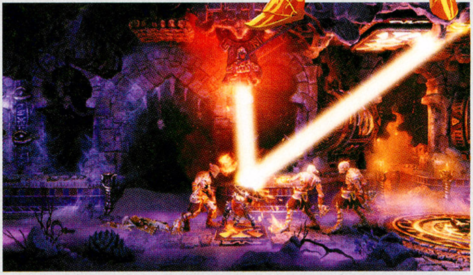
(box) or a single line (plank) and the object appears in the game world." Of course, most players will only have one Wii U GamePad, but co-op won't be a problem, as the Wii U Pro Controller and Wii Remote will be fully supported as well. "The one playing with the Wii U GamePad will probably want to be the wizard," notes Hyvärinen. "Conjuring is just so awesome with the touch screen."

On the tech side, the director's cut boasts scores of tiny upgrades that easily win it the crown as the loveliest-looking version of Trine 2. Hyvärinen's team has used the added power of the platform to upgrade the game's textures, improve the lightning, and add new shader effects. "The updates are not radical," admits Hyvärinen, "but they add an extra bit of visual flair. Our goal is to ensure that Trine 2 is going to be one of the best-looking games for Wii U."

Besides prettying up the graphics, Hyvärinen's team has made over a hundred minor improvement to the game itself. Many of them involve arcane issues of technical performance and game balance, but others provide an additional layer of polish designed to fix some of the rough spots in the original release. For example, the game's story is told through poems and stories found by the characters, but where they previously had only Pontius's voice reading the text, it will now be read aloud by whoever the player is currently controlling.

But most of the team's energy has been spent expanding the game's content. In addition to the original Trine 2's 13-level campaign, a new expansion pack adds six more levels, taking players through a blistering desert, a serenely beautiful





[Above] Ah, the old bounce-the-sunbeam-off-the-shield trick. Works every time!

cloud city, and the not-so-serenely-beautiful intestinal tract of a giant worm. To match the new terrain, the expansion is packed with new puzzle mechanics based on light, water, gravity, and magnetism. The new skills that allow our heroes to interact with these elements have been added into the original Trine 2 campaign as well, providing a variety of new puzzle solutions that offer Trine 2 veterans an incentive to replay the standard campaign.

The director's cut also features the entirely new Magic Mayhem mode. Hyvärinen isn't ready to spill many details on that, but allows that it's designed for up to four players (either online or offline) and uses the Wii U GamePad to provide an asymmetrical multiplayer experience. Players won't have to wait long to see it in action, as Trine 2: Director's Cut is "right on track" for a day-and-date release with the Wii U hardware. You'll find it exclusively as a download, at a price that Hyvärinen believes "will make fans happy."

ONLY TRINE WILL TELL

FrozenByte is a leading player in a new generation of developers that shun boxed software in favor of downloadable titles, and the company's experience with the Wii U has been nothing but positive so far. "It's clear that Nintendo has taken digital downloads quite seriously this time," says Hyvärinen. "The features Nintendo is offering to developers are quite attractive, and I believe we'll be seeing a lot of quality games there, from both big AAA developers/publishers and independent developers."

So does that point to the dawn of a new era, or will Nintendo fans continue to play second fiddle to other platform users for FrozenByte's next generation of games? According to Hyvärinen, the future looks bright: "Truth be told, we are interested in developing a Wii U version of Splot [an in-development PC puzzle-platformer], and if everything goes well, then the chances are good for our future games too. We'll have to see!" **—CASEY L.**

This is **Richard**. He knows it's his job to teach his son **Scotty** what this whole gaming thing is about. The age rating helps him **pick the right games**, but being a good dad means he always wants to know more.

That's exactly what the **ESRB's rating summaries** are for.

Search for a game's rating summary at **ESRB.org**.

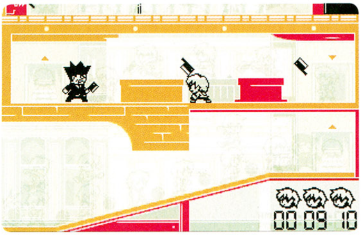
Rich H.
Lafayette, IN

ESRB
ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE
RATING BOARD

EARLY CHILDHOOD eC CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
EVERYONE 10+ E 10+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
MATURE 17+ M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
ADULTS ONLY 18+ AO CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

EVALUATION STATION

N3DS DOWNLOAD



SCORE 001185
7 COMBO!

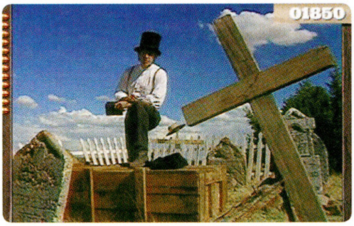
JOHNNY KUNG FU

PUBLISHER: UFO INTERACTIVE **GENRE:** ACTION **PRICE:** $5.99

Johnny Kung Fu is a love letter to Nintendo's classic Game & Watch series. The first stage is done in true G&W style, perfectly re-creating the look and feel of the old portable LCD games. From there, the title branches out into a variety of different stages that may change the graphical style, but they all retain the simplistic gameplay. A couple of the stages are direct riffs on specific G&W titles, namely Ball (the very first G&W game) and Judge. These levels are pure tests of your reflexes, and their pixelated, Game Boy-esque graphics are extremely charming. Other stages feature modern visuals and slightly more involved gameplay. These sections are all variants on beat-'em-up games, and a (little) bit of depth is added to the action as Johnny occasionally learns new attacks. Despite the basic gameplay throughout, Johnny Kung Fu is surprisingly challenging. In addition to the increased difficulty as you progress, a strict one-hour timer constantly ticks down. That five minutes is taken away each time you die and continue makes for a frantic experience. It's not complex and the selection of minigames can get repetitive, but it's still oddly addictive and a fine homage to gaming's past. —PHIL T.

Recommended

N3DS DOWNLOAD



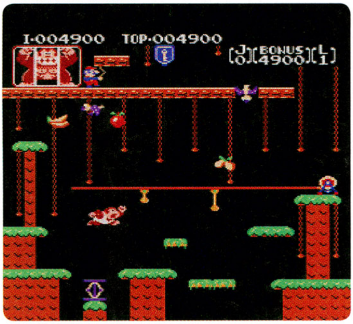
MAD DOG McCREE

PUBLISHER: DIGITAL LEISURE **GENRE:** SHOOTER **PRICE:** $7.99

Originally released as a light-gun-controlled arcade shooter at the dawn of the '90s, Mad Dog McCree was created during a time when developers were experimenting with gameplay consisting entirely of live-action video footage. The result is a title with acting so cheesy that it's hilarious, and gameplay unlike anything else on the Nintendo eShop. Most of the action takes place in gallery-style shootouts, though there are a few Western-movie moments where you're challenged to a one-on-one quick draw. Unfortunately, much of the game's difficulty comes from straining to see where you're being shot from and the confusion of when you're actually allowed to shoot the bandits. Furthermore, the entire affair takes only about a half hour to complete, so it's tough to justify its $8 price tag. —CODY M.

Hmmm...

N3DS VIRTUAL CONSOLE



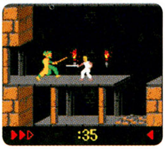
DONKEY KONG JR.

PLATFORM: NES **ORIGINALLY RELEASED:** 1986 **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO **GENRE:** PLATFORMER **PRICE:** $4.99

Donkey Kong Jr. may not be considered as classic as its predecessor, but it deserves some recognition as one of Nintendo's best early titles. Its four stages are quite varied, the action moves at a brisk pace, the bright and colorful graphics provide tons of visual appeal, and the musical stings—while brief—are catchy. And unlike the NES version of Donkey Kong, this port contains all of the arcade game's levels. —PHIL T.

Recommended

N3DS VIRTUAL CONSOLE



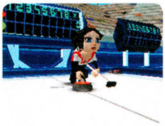
PRINCE OF PERSIA

PLATFORM: GAME BOY COLOR
ORIGINALLY RELEASED: 1999
PUBLISHER: UBISOFT/RED ORB ENTERTAINMENT
GENRE: PLATFORMER
PRICE: $4.99

This port of Prince of Persia was (and is) mostly faithful to the methodical, puzzle-oriented classic. But the game's ruthless difficulty—no checkpoints!—is made more ruthless still by broken hit detection during sword fights and a propensity to ignore button presses. Fortunately, the Restore Point feature cures all, and renders the game more playable than the '89 original. —PATRICK C.

Recommended

DSiWARE



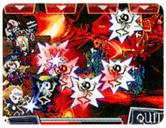
CURLING SUPER CHAMPIONSHIP

PUBLISHER: CYPRONIA
GENRE: SPORTS
PRICE: 500 POINTS/$4.99

Using the stylus to slide and guide your stones, Curling Super Championship simulates the winter sport of curling fairly well. However, there aren't any options to shorten or save during the title's lengthy matches, which, as in real curling, consist of eight turns per round and eight rounds per game. And without music, the constant horn noises and annoying coach screams just make the already repetitive games feel even longer. —CODY M.

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



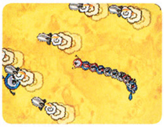
DEVIL BAND—ROCK THE UNDERWORLD

PUBLISHER: CIRCLE ENTERTAINMENT
GENRE: STRATEGY
PRICE: 200 POINTS/$1.99

A classic case of an amusing premise (devilish rockers deploy fanatical fans to fend off waves of monsters) tied to awful gameplay. With your rockers on the left, you'll station various fans on a grid between you and the incoming horde on the right. Then you'll click furiously to shoot baddies. Both your bandmates and fans can be upgraded, but the RPG-lite fun is wasted on boring, repetitive play mechanics. —PATRICK C.

Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE



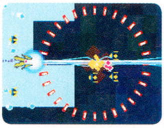
ESCAPE THE VIRUS: SWARM SURVIVAL

PUBLISHER: TEYON
GENRE: ACTION
PRICE: 200 POINTS/$1.99

A tweaked (and diminished) port of WiiWare's Viral Survival, Escape the Virus offers basic "dodge your enemies" action. In Normal mode you'll form a snake by collecting bits of DNA—while dodging viral baddies. In Baby mode you'll ditch the snake and simply shoot the DNA you collect at said baddies. The price point is budget and the gameplay is amusing, but the repetitiveness is so intense it's hard to recommend. —PATRICK C.

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



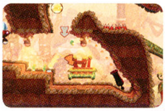
FLIP THE CORE

PUBLISHER: ENGINE SOFTWARE
GENRE: SHOOTER
PRICE: 200 POINTS/$1.99

A scrolling shooter with a literal twist, Flip the Core requires players to flip dynamically between horizontal and vertical viewpoints. Contrary to what you might expect, the mechanic isn't a pointless gimmick; the game does a respectable job of presenting obstacles and enemies that are best dealt with in a particular orientation. Stylistically, the game is unabashedly retro (and rudimentary), but the Spartan aesthetic suits the gameplay premise. —PATRICK C.

Recommended

WiiWARE



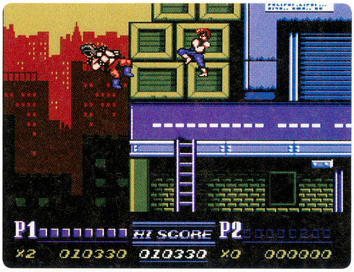
SAVE THE FURRIES

PUBLISHER: SDP GAMES
GENRE: PUZZLE
PRICE: 1,000 POINTS

Save the Furries is a platform puzzler of the save-hapless-creatures-by-manipulating-the-environment sort. The titular Furries walk brainlessly through levels, waiting on your divine hand to manipulate environmental objects—carts, blocks, slings, etc.—to save them from myriad hazards. While the production values are outstanding, and the art style fairly distinct (think Raving Rabbids), play simply isn't engaging (or consistent) enough to justify the effort—or the hefty price. —PATRICK C.

Hmmm...

Wii VIRTUAL CONSOLE



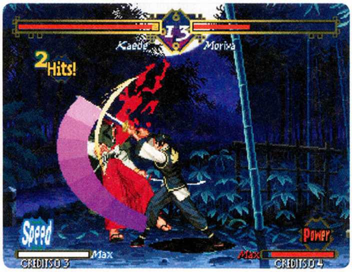
DOUBLE DRAGON II: THE REVENGE

PLATFORM: NES **ORIGINALLY RELEASED:** 1990 **PUBLISHER:** AKSYS/ACCLAIM **GENRE:** ACTION **PRICE:** 500 POINTS

Without a doubt, Double Dragon II was one of the best beat-'em-ups to ever hit the NES. With solid visuals, cool moves, creative level design, and, best of all, two-player cooperative gameplay, Double Dragon II put the competition (and its predecessor) to shame. The game doesn't hold up quite as well today (thanks to several more-advanced brawlers already available on Virtual Console), but there's still plenty of fun to be had once you get accustomed to the unique control scheme. —CHRIS H.

Recommended

Wii VIRTUAL CONSOLE



THE LAST BLADE

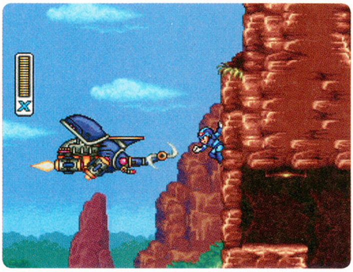
PLATFORM: NEOGEO **ORIGINALLY RELEASED:** 1997 **PUBLISHER:** D4 ENTERPRISE/SNK **GENRE:** FIGHTING **PRICE:** 900 POINTS

Justin C.'s Pick

I've long considered Samurai Shodown to be SNK's best weapons-based fighting series, but after playing The Last Blade, I may have to reconsider. As you might expect from an SNK title, this game has great graphics and a solid soundtrack. However, it's the deceptively deep gameplay that makes The Last Blade truly stand out. Not only does this title have a vaguely Soulcalibur-ish control scheme, but it also offers two fighting-style options—power and speed—that can radically affect your combat strategies.

Recommended

Wii VIRTUAL CONSOLE



MEGA MAN X2

PLATFORM: SUPER NES **ORIGINALLY RELEASED:** 1995 **PUBLISHER:** CAPCOM **GENRE:** ACTION **PRICE:** 800 POINTS

Chris H.'s Pick

Mega Man X2 doesn't break new ground the way its predecessor did, but it's an excellent action game nonetheless. The title delivers just what you'd expect from Mega Man—fantastic controls, great graphics, lots of challenge, and the ever-brilliant ability to steal bosses' weapons and use them to exploit other foes' weaknesses. As always, the level design is superb, and secret routes leading to optional bosses add a slight twist. I have to admit that some of the villains are pretty silly, though. Wire Sponge? Really?

Recommended

ALSO AVAILABLE

If you like match-three puzzle games, you're in luck: a trio of new titles is now available on the Nintendo DSi Shop: **7 Wonders II** (800 Points/$7.99), **Cat Frenzy** (200 Points/$1.99), and **Jewel Legends—Tree of Life** (500 Points/$4.99). You do not get bonus points for buying all three.... Want to play sudoku but find it too tough? Then you might want to try the simplified **Lola's Fruit Shop Sudoku** (200 Points/$1.99) for DSiWare.... Speaking of grid-based puzzles, **Slitherlink by Nikoli** ($4.99) is available to Nintendo 3DS owners in the Nintendo eShop.

PREVIEWS

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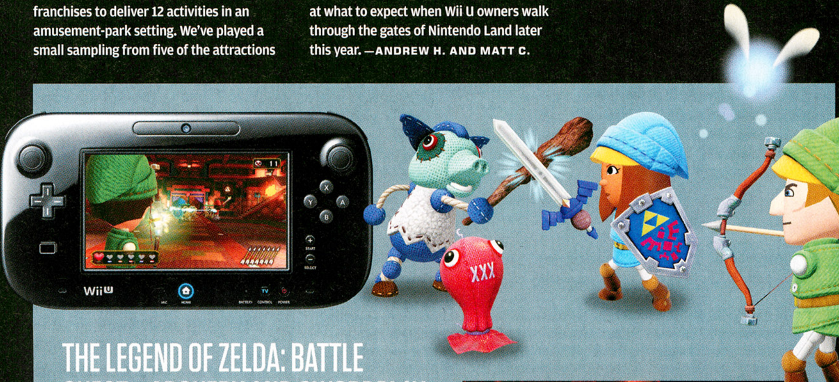
NINTENDO LAND

All the fun of the amusement park without the long lines.

DESIGNED TO SHOWCASE the myriad abilities of the Wii U console and GamePad controller, Nintendo Land pulls together a wide array of familiar characters and franchises to deliver 12 activities in an amusement-park setting. We've played a small sampling from five of the attractions so far, and all deliver unique takes on their source material while showing how the Wii U GamePad can shake up both single- and multiplayer gameplay. Here's an early look at what to expect when Wii U owners walk through the gates of Nintendo Land later this year. —**ANDREW H. AND MATT C.**

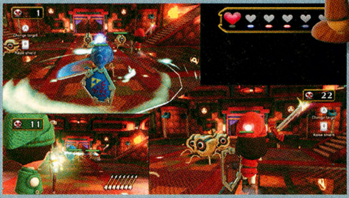
Wii U PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **NINTENDO**
RELEASE: **HOLIDAY 2012**

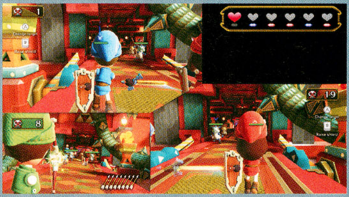


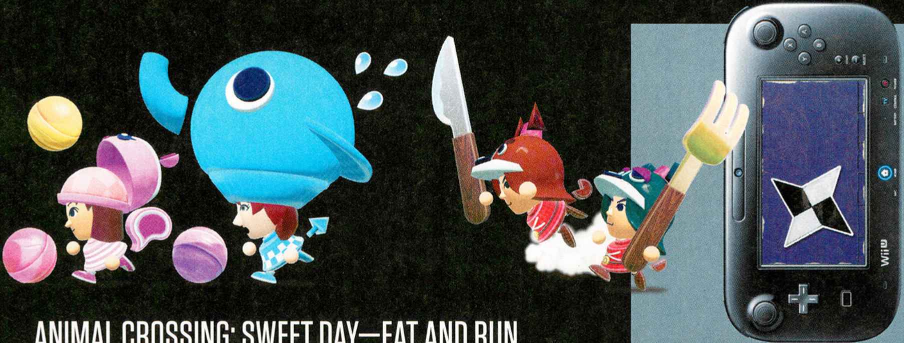
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: BATTLE QUEST—ARCHERY AND SWORDPLAY

Capturing the essence of the beloved adventure series' combat, what we saw of The Legend of Zelda: Battle Quest serves up a three-player cooperative jaunt wherein an archer (using the Wii U GamePad) and two Wii Remote Plus controller-wielding swordfighters must work in tandem. While being pushed along a fixed path through waves of colorful enemy creatures, the two short-range warriors must swing their swords to cut through foes as the archer uses the GamePad to locate and fire at far-off targets.

Using the Wii U GamePad to identify and attack enemies is a breeze: the built-in gyroscope and accelerometer let you move the controller around the room like you would the game world, plus you can reload your arrows simply by holding the GamePad level with the floor. Don't spend more time than necessary preparing projectiles for the next round of enemies, though—all three players share a set number of hearts, so a weak link in the chain can bring down the whole crew. Work together, though, and you'll emerge victorious in this fantasy-themed affair.



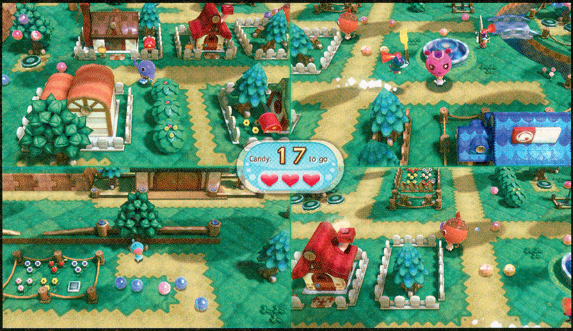




ANIMAL CROSSING: SWEET DAY—EAT AND RUN

We may still be waiting for the promised Nintendo 3DS series entry, but fans can get a fresh taste of the adorable franchise via Animal Crossing: Sweet Day. Set in a brightly animated town, this attraction supports five players, with four wielding Wii Remotes as candy-grabbing citizens. Meanwhile, the fifth player uses the Wii U GamePad to command a pair of guards tasked with making the rest of the players drop their precious treats.

The four candy collectors must work together to amass a grand total of 50 pieces, but the guards are swift and tenacious, and the GamePad-holder controls both guards simultaneously using the two analog sticks. His goal is to zero in on and catch any of the other players a cumulative three times to win the match. All told, Animal Crossing: Sweet Day is a speedy and strategic five-player game that provides distinct experiences on both sides and seems sure to offer plenty of replay value.



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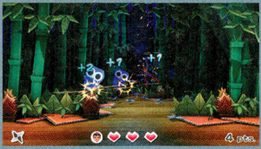
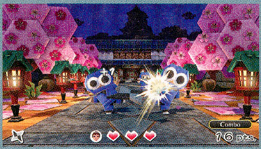




TAKAMARU'S NINJA CASTLE—THROWING STAR SHOWDOWN

Easily the least recognizable of the bunch, Takamaru's Ninja Castle is based on Nazo no Murasame-Jou, a Famicom Disk System game released only in Japan in 1986. The Nintendo Land event maintains the ninja aesthetic of the original, but instead of a top-down action game Takamaru's Ninja Castle is a frenzied single-player affair that lets you launch a bevy of throwing stars at moving opponents.

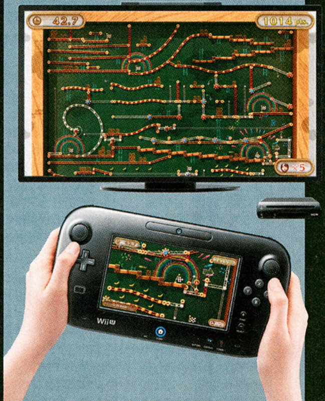
Holding the GamePad flat in one hand, with the side facing your television, you quickly brush your fingers across the touch screen to whip stars at the cartoonish ninjas that appear on the TV. The GamePad can be tilted as desired to affect the aim and trajectory of your shots, plus the screen recognizes the speed at which you launch the stars, adding a bit of physical skill to the action. In practice, Takamaru's Ninja Castle is much like an on-rails arcade shooter, but instead of simply aiming and firing, you'll need to fling with precision to win this battle.

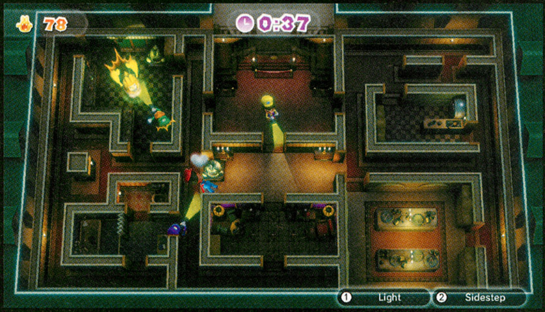
DONKEY KONG'S CRASH COURSE—FULL TILT OBSTACLE COURSE

Nintendo Land's single-player, physics-based puzzle-platformer sports a pretty straightforward premise: maneuver a mine cart-like contraption through a 2D obstacle course using the hardware's motion-sensing tilt mechanics. Despite Crash Course's pick-up-and-play appeal, though, the easy-to-learn, difficult-to-master attraction can be as menacing as the big ape himself.

Navigating its gentle slopes and steep hills is simple—until the first time you slam, smash, or flip your cart with too much force; turns out the vehicle's as fragile as DK's breakable barrels, so managing its momentum is as important as steering it through the maze of girders and gears. Toss in the fact that scores are based on the time it takes to conquer the level, and Crash Course is just begging to become the next fix for leaderboard junkies.

Additional elements, such as point-boosting collectible bananas and more-complex obstacles—elevators, loops, jumps—that require some analog-stick and shoulder-button inputs further fuel the arcade-flavored appeal. Players are granted just five lives, but checkpoints spread throughout ensure the fun is never eclipsed by controller-chucking frustration. Much more than a mechanics-teaching minigame, Crash Course is shaping up to be one of Nintendo Land's best attractions.



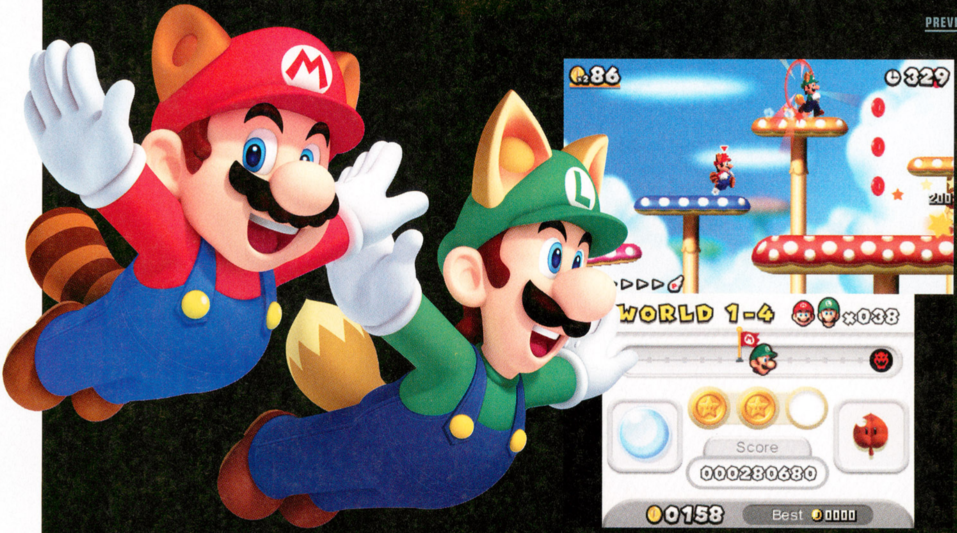


LUIGI'S GHOST MANSION—HAUNTING HIJINKS

Fans of 2003's Pac-Man Vs. should feel right at home in Luigi's Ghost Mansion. Whereas that GameCube title put three players behind ghosts on the TV screen while a fourth controlled Pac-Man on a Game Boy Advance, Nintendo Land's take on the concept turns the tables... sort of. Exploring rooms of a haunted house from a top-down perspective, four Wii Remote-wielding ghost hunters view the television as a player-controlled specter attempts to spook them from behind the Wii U GamePad.

A number of game-changing wrinkles make Luigi's Ghost Mansion more strategic than spine-chilling. For starters, the ghoul is visible only on the GamePad screen; those clutching Wii Remotes, however, will feel a rumble whenever their ethereal enemy is close by. The ghost's life can be siphoned with a flashlight, but shining the beam drains its battery. On the flip side, the paranormal threat can take out its predators by sneaking up on them.

Matches are timed, but end early if the specter—or its slayers—are eliminated. In our experience playing as both ghost and ghost-buster, Nintendo Land's haunted-house attraction seems fine-tuned for tense games of cat and mouse whether players choose to spook or be spooked.



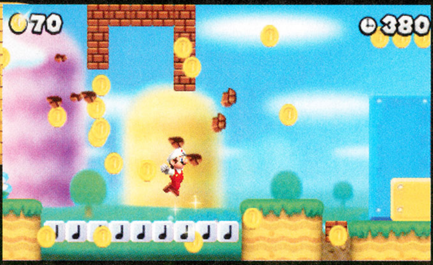
NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. 2

Go for the gold.

A NEW MARIO platformer is always a treat, but it almost feels like we're getting spoiled this year: not only is New Super Mario Bros. U launching concurrently with the Wii U console (see our preview on page 38), but Nintendo 3DS owners will get to enjoy New Super Mario Bros. 2, the first numbered sequel to 2006's New Super Mario Bros. for Nintendo DS. Not that we're complaining; as the saying goes—and as this game illustrates—the more the merrier.

Ostensibly, your task is to rescue the perpetually imperiled Princess Peach from the dastardly Koopalings, but your real goal, it seems, is to become a zillionaire. Coins are nearly everywhere: you can use POW Blocks to turn bricks into coins; put a Gold Block on your head that emits change while you move; jump through a Gold Ring that temporarily turns enemies auriferous and causes them to spout specie when they're dispatched; or grab a Gold Flower and throw giant fireballs that transform every brick block they touch into loot. Along the way, you will encounter Red Rings and Switch Blocks that make red and blue coins, respectively, appear. Furthermore, there are three Star Coins to discover in each level. Finding and acquiring them may prove challenging—even fatal—but with all the 1-ups you earn as a result of amassing ducats, you needn't be overly concerned. (Besides, if you die five times in a stage, you can unlock the Invincibility Leaf—à la Super Mario 3D Land—which transforms you into the unstoppable White Raccoon Mario.)

Nowhere else are bits of change as important as they are in the Coin Rush mode, though: here you race through three random levels pulled from the main game, and grab as much currency as possible within a time limit. Once you've finished, your collection is tallied and you can then share your score and challenge other folks to beat it via StreetPass. —**JUSTIN C.**

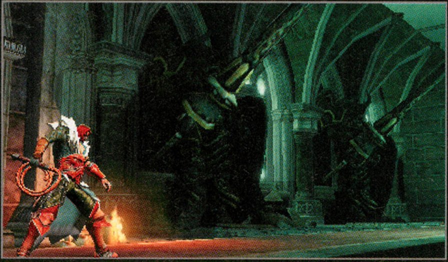


[Above] First you get the power-up, then you get the money.

N3DS
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **NINTENDO**
RELEASE: **AUGUST 2012**

CASTLEVANIA: LORDS OF SHADOW—MIRROR OF FATE

Gothic horror has a new home.



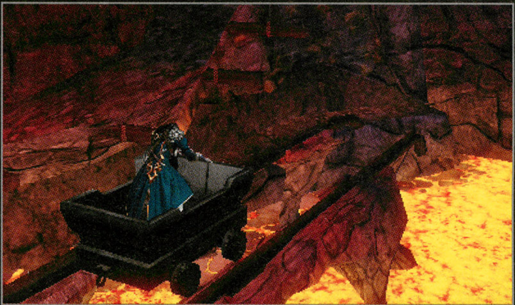
CASTLEVANIA: LORDS OF SHADOW— Mirror of Fate is not the Castlevania that Nintendo fans once knew. This is a new breed of Castlevania—darker, edgier, and with deeper combat than before. Mirror of Fate is the sequel to the original Castlevania: Lords of Shadow, which reinvented the popular vampire-slaying franchise when it hit consoles in 2010. But that game's protagonist, Gabriel Belmont, is no longer the hero he was; he has turned to the dark side and is now known as Dracula. In Mirror of Fate, it's up to you to right Gabriel's wrongs and restore honor to the Belmont family name.

To do so, you'll take control of four characters—including Gabriel's son Trevor Belmont, the barbarianlike Simon Belmont, and the vampiric Alucard—and breach Dracula's horror-filed castle in four time periods. Each warrior has different weapons, subweapons, and abilities, but in every case you'll lay waste to the forces of the undead using an ever-growing array of melee combos, supported by magical powers that can enhance your offensive and defensive capabilities.

Like many other Castlevania games to appear on Nintendo platforms, Mirror of Fate has a healthy exploration component, as well. Additional areas will open up as you gain new abilities, and you'll have to track down hidden switches to unlock doors that lead further into the castle depths. Expect a thorough test of your platforming skills, too—you'll even be able to swing from grappling points using your weapons.

Further adding to the game's appeal are epic boss fights (Konami representatives promise that some of the bosses will be absolutely massive) and very impressive use of stereoscopic 3D. Although the game looks good in screenshots, the deeply layered backgrounds are amazing in motion. The stage is set for a cataclysmic clash between good and evil; we'll see how it unfolds when Castlevania: Lords of Shadow—Mirror of Fate hits the Nintendo 3DS handheld this fall. **—CHRIS H.**

N3DS PUBLISHER: **KONAMI**
DEVELOPER: **MERCURY STEAM**
RELEASE: **FALL 2012**



[Right] Dracula really needs to take better care of the mine-cart tracks in his lava-filled catacombs. A bloke could get hurt!

NINJA GAIDEN 3: RAZOR'S EDGE

Building a better ninja

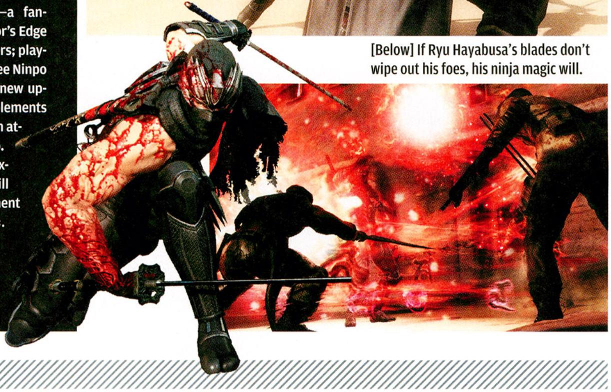
When Ninja Gaiden 3 arrived on other systems earlier this year, faithful fans criticized its departure from the previous two entries in the series. Taking the feedback into account, the developers of Ninja Gaiden 3: Razor's Edge decided to treat the Wii U port as a do-over of sorts.

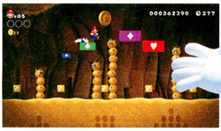
On top of bringing back dismemberment—a fan-favorite feature that was excised from NG3—Razor's Edge is addressing the original's dearth of death-dealers; players can now spill entrails via six weapons and three Ninpo powers, all of which can be tweaked through a new upgrade system. Additionally, enhanced AI complements more-fluid, fast-paced combat—something we can attest to based on our brief thumb-blistering demo.

While Razor's Edge is primarily focused on fixing flaws and offering fresh ways to flay foes, it will also utilize the GamePad for inventory management and triggering screen-clearing attacks. —MATT C.

Wii U PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **TECMO KOEI/TEAM NINJA**
RELEASE: **HOLIDAY 2012**

[Below] If Ryu Hayabusa's blades don't wipe out his foes, his ninja magic will.





[Above] Sometimes these GamePad-created blocks feel like a necessity.

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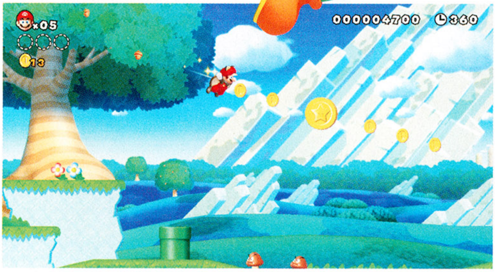


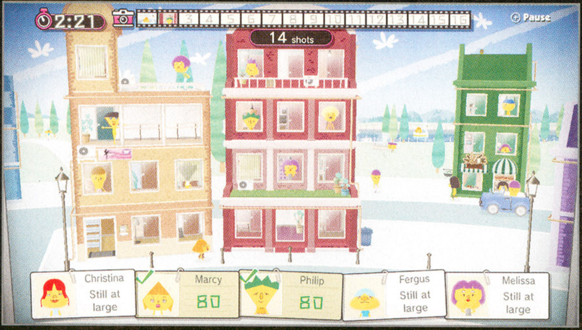
NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. U

Lend Mario and pals a helping hand.

High-definition graphics, Baby Yoshis, and new power-ups such as the Flying Squirrel Suit are certainly nothing to sneeze at, but what really sets New Super Mario Bros. U apart from its predecessors is this side-scrolling platformer's Wii U GamePad functionality. During our demo, four people in our party held a Wii Remote NES-style, each person controlling Mario, Luigi, or one of two Toads à la New Super Mario Bros. Wii. The fifth person had the GamePad, granting him the ability to conjure blocks with a tap of the stylus. That meant he could create a platform that made it easier for the rest of us to reach the end-of-level flagpole's finial, for instance, allowing us to earn 1-ups. Or if he'd wanted to be a jerk, he could have placed a block in our path as we were jumping across a chasm, sending us plummeting to our doom. —JUSTIN C.

Wii U PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **NINTENDO**
RELEASE: **HOLIDAY 2012**

I gotta make some games...



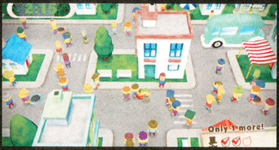
GAME & WARIO

The Wii U GamePad plays many roles in this wacky collection.

FOR YEARS NOW, Wario has been the king of microgames thanks to the popular WarioWare series. Things are a bit different in Game & Wario, however, the title of which is inspired by Nintendo's classic Game & Watch handheld LCD games. Here, the minigames each last minutes instead of seconds, and not surprisingly, they're specifically designed to make creative use of the Wii U GamePad.

In one game, dubbed Arrow, a legion of tiny robotic Warios marches toward you on the TV. They are, for some reason, after the strawberries displayed on the GamePad screen. The controller features a bow that you draw back and aim (by moving the GamePad) to launch arrows at the little invaders. If the crowd gets too thick, hitting a landmine or activating a pepper bomb (by tickling the nose that comprises your bow) can take out a large group at once. If the 'bots manage to slip past your defenses, there's one last chance to crush them with your fingertips as they move onto the GamePad screen.

A decidedly simpler minigame is Ski, which has you controlling WarioWare's disco king Jimmy T. as he careens down a slope. The TV displays a 3D perspective while the GamePad screen provides a bird's-eye view of the action. Tilting the GamePad steers Jimmy, so achieving a good time is simply a matter of keeping him on course until the bottom of the hill.

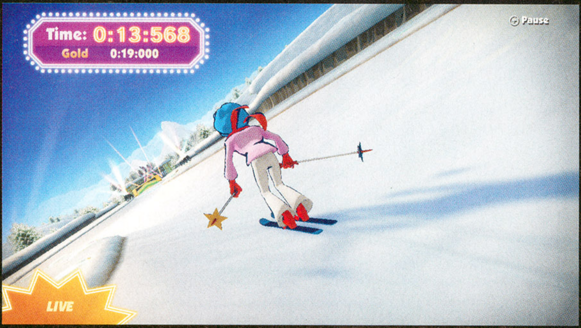


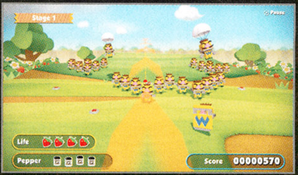
[Below] You should always wear your leisure suit and platform shoes when skiing.

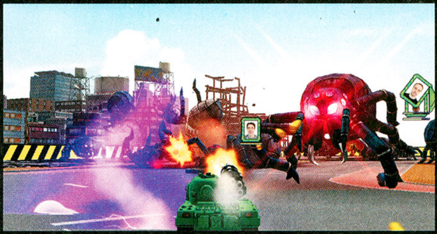
Things get more involved again in Shutter, which treats the GamePad like a camera. Your goal is to snap pictures of notorious criminals that are hiding around town. Holding the GamePad up to the TV allows it to act like a camera viewfinder, and you're free to zoom in and shoot at will. A score is generated based on how centered and in-focus your subject is in the photos. There is also a secret character that briefly pops up in different locations and will net you bonus points if you're able to capture his likeness.

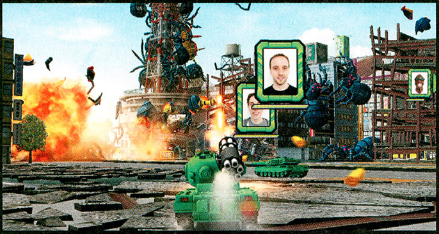
These three games are undoubtedly the tip of the iceberg. We can't wait to see what other bizarre surprises Game & Wario has in store when it is released later this year. —PHIL T.

Wii U
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: NINTENDO
RELEASE: TBA







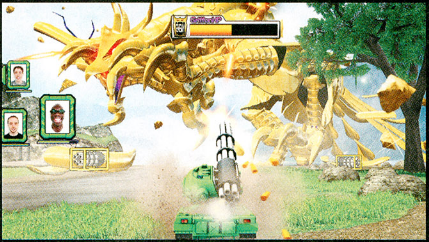


TANK! TANK! TANK!

Did we mention there are tanks?

VIDEO GAMES ARE growing increasingly sophisticated, offering deeper and more innovative experiences than ever before. But sometimes it's still fun to just blow up everything in sight, and that's where the enthusiastically titled Tank! Tank! Tank! comes in. Based on an arcade game originally released in 2009, this Wii U launch title lets you join forces with up to three fellow tank commanders in an effort to exterminate the giant monsters invading Earth's cities. Fortunately for mankind, your vehicles are a lot more nimble than the real thing—with a big focus on evasion—and various power-ups temporarily enhance their destructive potential.

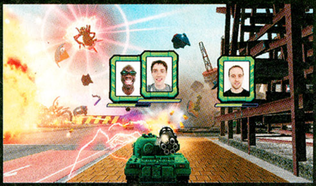
Before rolling out, you can use the Wii U GamePad to take photos of everyone's faces, which will appear on the TV above their respective tanks and can be spruced up with various helmets, masks, and more. Ostensibly the photos are to help you keep track of who's actually contributing to civilization's defense and who's just driving around knocking down buildings—or in the case of the competitive Versus mode, who last destroyed your tank so you can swear fiery vengeance (in the game, of course).

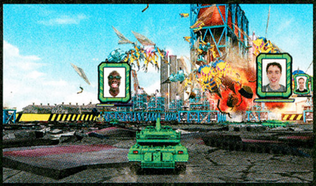


Though we've yet to see it in action for ourselves, a Kong mode will also be included in the Wii U version of Tank! Tank! Tank! It allows one player to put his picture on the face of the monstrous Kong and wreak havoc via the Wii U GamePad while everyone else collaborates to take him down. Rounding out the package is a solo Story Mission mode in which you can level up your tank and unlock new ones.

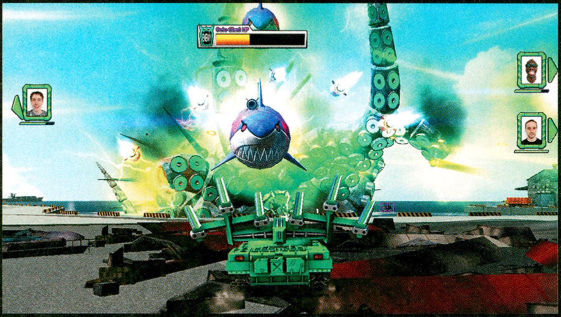
It's not exactly a showcase for the Wii U hardware, but Tank! Tank! Tank! could scratch a certain itch for players who appreciate a bit of arcade-style silliness. **—STEVE T.**

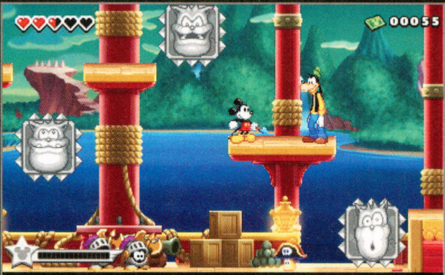
Wii U PUBLISHER: **NAMCO BANDAI**
DEVELOPER: **NAMCO BANDAI**
RELEASE: **Q4 2012**

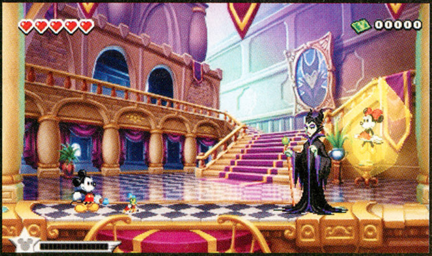




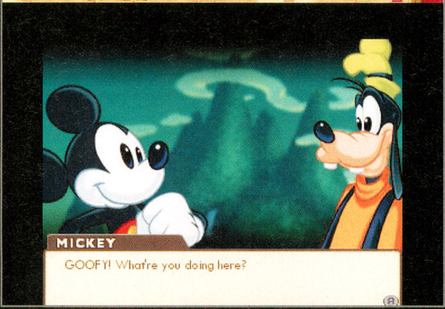
[Below] Yes, that is a giant mechanical shark being hurled at you by an even more-giant mechanical octopus.



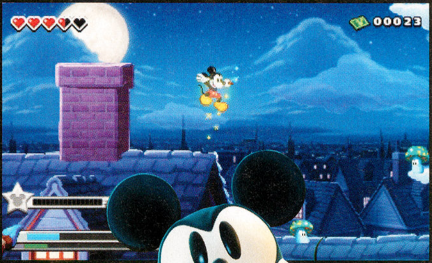




[Above] Wicked witch Mizrabel might not be the loveliest lady around, but we have to admit that her castle looks drop-dead gorgeous.


MICKEY

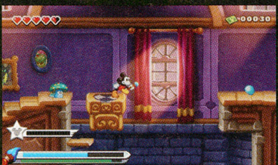
GOOFY! What're you doing here?



DISNEY EPIC MICKEY: POWER OF ILLUSION

This illusion might be better than reality.

IF YOU'RE AN old-school gamer, there's really only one thing you need to know about Epic Mickey: Power of Illusion, and it's that the game truly feels like a worthy follow-up to the classic 16-bit platformer Castle of Illusion Starring Mickey Mouse. From Mickey's walk to his jump to his butt-bounce, no detail was omitted when it comes to making Disney's rambunctious rodent handle like his Sega Genesis self. Even the audio effects for grabbing pickups and defeating enemies sound like they used to.



But Power of Illusion is far more than a trip down memory lane. The retro-style 2D action is now infused with Epic Mickey's trademark paint and thinner play mechanics. Instead of using these abilities in real time as in the console Epic Mickey games, however, you'll tap outlines of specific objects that appear on the Nintendo 3DS system's touch screen, then play a quick minigame that enables you to either create an object with paint (by tracing its outline) or destroy an object with thinner (by quickly rubbing the screen). By doing so you'll be able to alter the fabric of the levels—you'll make platforms to reach new areas, destroy obstacles that block your path, create barriers to protect you from enemies, and much more.

Equally fun is the heaping dose of Disney magic that permeates almost every moment of the game. Although the adventure is set in the Castle of Illusion, you'll find yourself exploring environments from films such as *Peter Pan* and *Aladdin,* and you'll cross paths with familiar faces; in the early goings, we encountered Goofy, Uncle Scrooge, Captain Hook, Beast, Rapunzel, and more. After you meet up with nonplayable characters, they frequently take up residence in the castle and offer you the chance to take on side quests, which in turn can reward you with goodies such as paint and thinner upgrades or new sketch powers that grant you special limited-use abilities. Something new and surprising waits around every corner, which is just one of the reasons why Epic Mickey: Power of Illusion is shaping up to be one of the most exciting N3DS offerings of the year. —**CHRIS H.**

N3DS PUBLISHER: **DISNEY INTERACTIVE**
DEVELOPER: **DREAMRIFT**
RELEASE: **NOVEMBER 2012**

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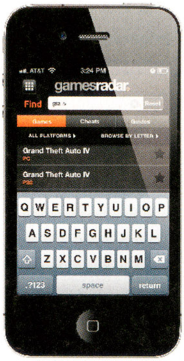
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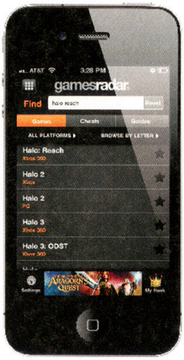
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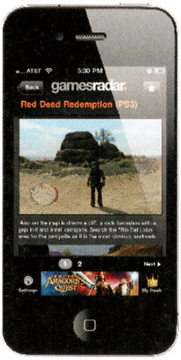
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Just Add Imagination

You may have played Scribblenauts before, but not like this.
Scribblenauts Unlimited for Wii U gives you brand-new ways to unleash your creativity.

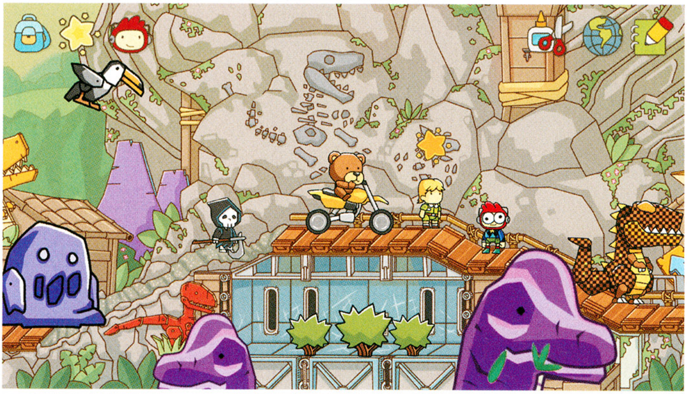
BY **CHIS HOFFMAN**

PUBLISHER: **WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE** DEVELOPER: **5TH CELL** RELEASE: **Q4 2012** **Wii U**

Scribblenauts was born from a concept that seemed too good to be true: if you can think of it and write it, then you can create it and use it. Want protagonist Maxwell to cross a pit? Make a bridge. Need to fight a dragon? Make a sword. Time to go underwater? Make a submarine. Amazingly, the game delivered on its lofty promises, resulting in one of the most unique and innovative titles on Nintendo DS. A sequel called Super Scribblenauts followed, offering refined gameplay and adding the ability to modify objects with adjectives, and now developer 5th Cell and publisher Warner Bros. Interactive are bringing the series to a home console for the first time with the impending release of Scribblenauts Unlimited for the Wii U system.

While maintaining the "write anything, solve everything" mantra that made the series great, Scribblenauts Unlimited reinvigorates the franchise with an upgraded game structure, greatly enhanced visuals, and new features that truly enable you to be bound only by your imagination. The game even explores Maxwell's motivations and explains how he got ahold of his magical object-spawning notebook in the first place. Read on to find out why Scribblenauts Unlimited just might be the biggest, best, most exciting Scribblenauts game yet.

A New Platform

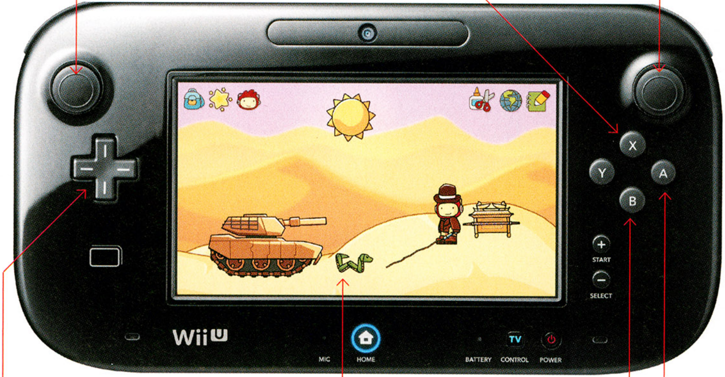


The most obvious change to the status quo is the fact that Scribblenauts Unlimited marks the series's debut on a home console. The game's trademark cartoony visual style remains intact, but the Wii U system's high-definition visuals allow the world, characters, and objects to look much cleaner and smoother than ever before. The Wii U GamePad controller also gives you more control over the action than you had in previous installments. Whereas in Super Scribblenauts you could use a menu option to switch between button- and touch-screen-driven configurations for controlling Maxwell, the flexibility of the GamePad allows you to use either method at any time. Furthermore, the power of Wii U means that you can create far more onscreen objects than you could in previous installments. In Super Scribblenauts you could conjure only 12 items or so before reaching your limit; now you'll be able to create somewhere in the neighborhood of 60.

And since viewing the game on a TV screen means you'll have more opportunities to share the experience with others, Scribblenauts Unlimited adds a component that until now has been missing from the series: cooperative gameplay. Though the first player will be the one in control of Maxwell and his all-powerful notebook, a second, third, or forth player can join in at any time using a Wii Remote controller to take the reins of any object you've produced. We're not sure how useful it will be to assume command of a giant genteel jeep or a barbaric blue badger, but we imagine it'll be fun to find out.

TAKE CONTROL

The Wii U GamePad is the catalyst that has allowed Scribblenauts to come to a home console for the first time. Take a look at how you'll play the game using the innovative controller.



LEFT STICK: Move Maxwell

ZL: Zoom out

X: Go through doors

ZR: Zoom in

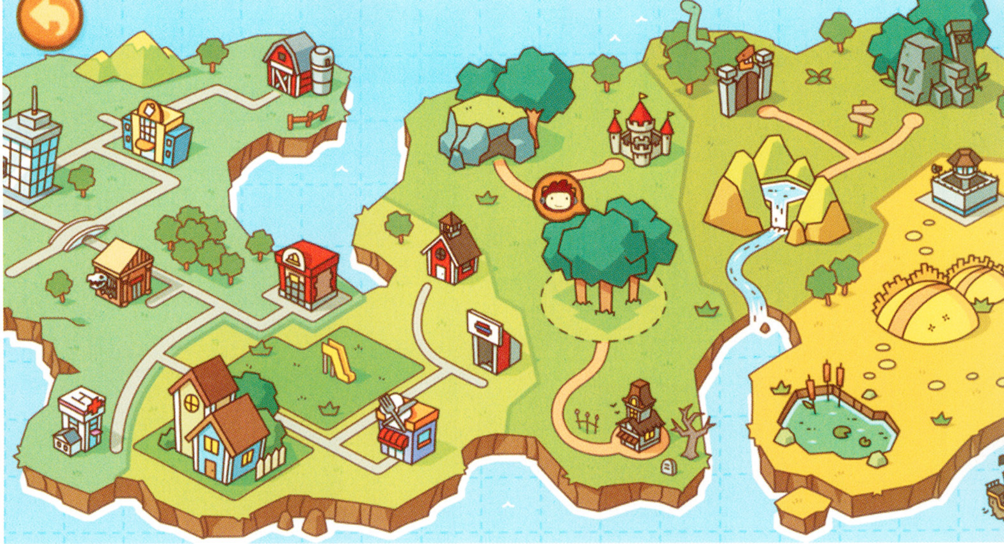
RIGHT STICK: Move the camera

CONTROL PAD: Cycle through onscreen objects

TOUCH SCREEN: The touch screen displays the same content that appears on the TV monitor. It also allows you to write words, interact with objects, and aim weapons. In addition, you can move Maxwell and the camera via the touch screen if you wish.

A: Action

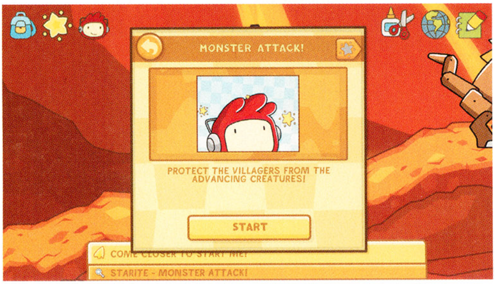
B: Jump



A New Structure

Past Scribblenauts games were broken into small, individual levels, each containing a discrete goal. Scribblenauts Unlimited is divided into somewhere between 30 and 40 large interconnected themed worlds (the developers are still determining the final number), each of which is fully explorable and offers multiple objectives. Whether you're visiting the friendly suburban neighborhood of Hyphen Heights, becoming one with nature in the Metaforest, getting down and dirty in the Underscore Mine, or meeting prehistoric pals in The Saurus Park, there's plenty to see and do in these multitiered environments.

If you wish, you can use each area as your personal sandbox to whip up whatever creations suit your fancy. You can make a disgusting superhero fight a cyborg kraken, or you can hop into a flying delicious schoolbus to take in the sights. You can even let loose an invincible, humongous, sinister yeti and watch as it destroys everything in its path. The worlds in Scribblenauts Unlimited are persistent, so anything you create or any events that occur will still be there if you leave the area and come back later. (But don't worry; even if that yeti obliterates everything, you can restore the world to its original state if you'd like.)



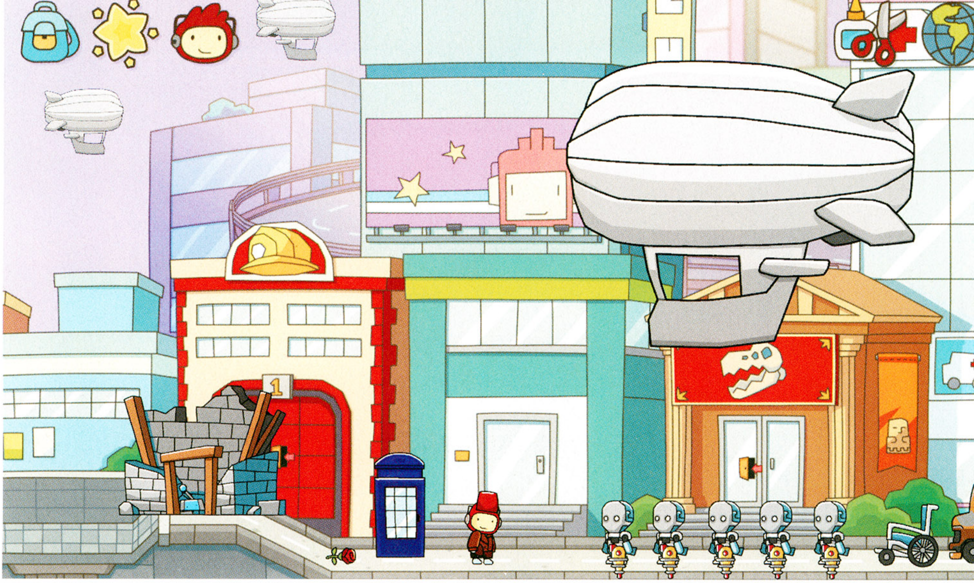
MONSTER ATTACK!

PROTECT THE VILLAGERS FROM THE ADVANCING CREATURES!

Aside from allowing for free-for-all fun, worlds are populated by NPCs, many of which offer quests that reward you with Starites (the primary collectible in the Scribblenauts series) or Starite shards (10 of which form a full Starite). Quests that award shards are usually quick, simple, and to the point. For example, you might encounter an overgrown lawn that needs to be trimmed, meet a tyrannosaurus that needs food dislodged from its throat, or encounter a child who has lost his toy. As always, the approach is up to your imagination—we used a lawnmower to cut the grass, caused the tyrannosaurus to sneeze up his lunch by throwing pepper on him, and mounted a pegasus to scour the level for the toy—and each challenge has countless solutions.

Tasks that award full Starites, meanwhile, are generally longer and feature complexity akin to the levels in past Scribblenauts games. In the Allosaurus on the Loose mission, for example, you're required to bring about a person capable of tracking a dinosaur, give the person a tool that will help him find his prey, place something in a cage to entice the dinosaur, provide a distraction to get the dinosaur's attention (after the hunter gets cornered), and then find a way to make the dinosaur sleep once it's worn itself out. In the Date Night mission, on the other hand, you have to help a young man look presentable, hook him up with a gift and some quality transportation, establish a romantic mood, and finally help the couple with their wedding after the man proposes.

Though you can find quests organically by simply interacting with the characters within each world, you can tackle objectives more quickly by turning on Starite View, which points out the NPCs that have missions for you. Altogether, the final game should contain more than 60 Starite tasks and 400-plus shard quests.



A New Type of Creativity

By writing nouns and adjectives, the Scribblenauts games have allowed players to generate an almost infinite variety of objects, but there have always been restrictions. Those restrictions are pretty much gone thanks to one of Scribblenauts Unlimited's standout new features: the object editor. This impressively deep tool lets you start with any object you want, then alter it by changing its colors, scaling or rotating its various parts, adding textures, and combining it with other objects (applied in the form of stamps). Essentially anything is fair game—you can summon a giant ninja with streetlights for arms, a moose equipped with tank treads, or a rocket-propelled sandwich, for example.

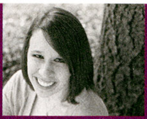
Once you've determined your object's physical form, you can customize its behavior via the same scripting tools that the programmers use to dictate the actions of the regular objects in the game. Is your object alive? What sound does it make? How much does it weigh? Does it float? Can you wear it? Can you ride it? Can you store things in it? How much health does it have? How high does it jump (if it can jump at all)? There are literally dozens of parameters that you can modify, including how it reacts to water, fire, and electricity. You can even modify your creation with weapons and wheels, so that rocket-propelled sandwich can now roll around on soccer balls and launch poisonous unicorns. And that's not all; you can also program your object so it behaves in specific ways when certain events occur.

Naturally, you'll also give your creation a unique name (which you can then write to conjure it into existence at any time), but perhaps the best part is that you'll be able to upload your custom object to an online server and share it with friends. Although the specifics are still being finalized, expect some type of integration with the Wii U system's Miiverse functionality, as well as multiple search filters that will help you find and share the types of objects that you're interested in.

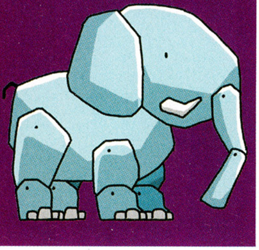
THE CRAZIEST CREATIONS

Just how weird can can your custom objects get? To find out, we asked the 5th Cell CEO/creative director Jeremiah Slaczka and producer Brittany Aubert for their oddest inventions.

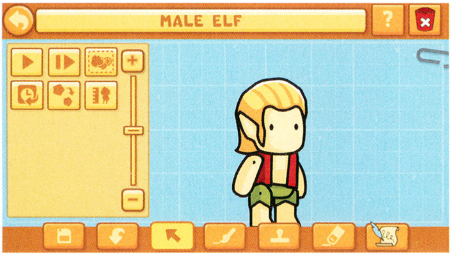
Jeremiah Slaczka: I always go back to my favorite object creation—a rideable toaster that had blinging gold skull wheels and shot trout that would explode. I could call it Toastaggedon, or something like that.



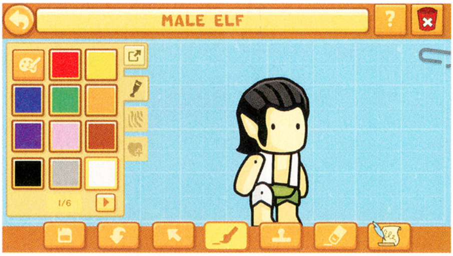
Brittany Aubert: I always start with the elephant, make it argyle, make its head really big and its ears really small, add hats to it, make its trunk into a pickle, and then have it explode when it comes in contact with hippies.



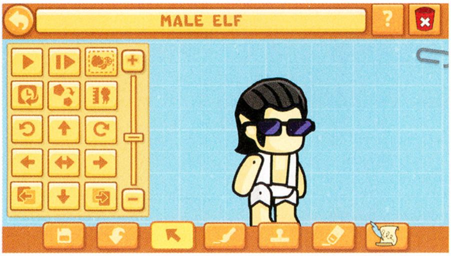
AN OBJECT IN THE MAKING



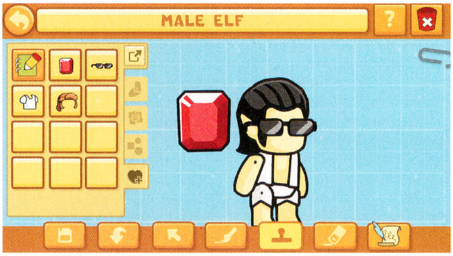
1. Start the object-creation process by selecting a pre-existing object.



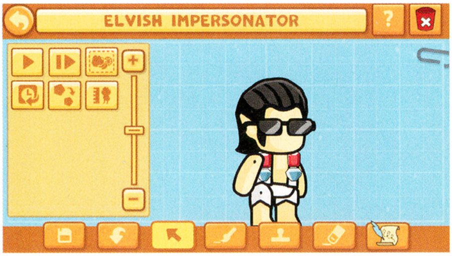
2. You can change the object's colors as you see fit.



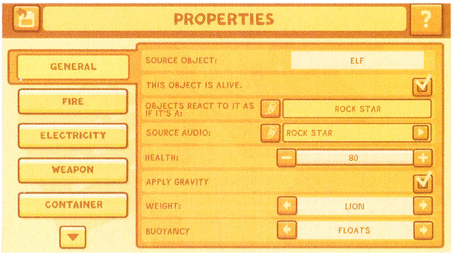
3. Using the stamp tool, combine your creation with other objects.



4. If an object isn't the size you require, scale it as needed.


ELVISH IMPERSONATOR

5. Combine as many objects as you need. Give your creation a unique name.


PROPERTIES
GENERAL
FIRE
ELECTRICITY
WEAPON
CONTAINER

SOURCE OBJECT: ELF

THIS OBJECT IS ALIVE. ☑

OBJECTS REACT TO IT AS IF IT'S A: ROCK STAR

SOURCE AUDIO: ROCK STAR

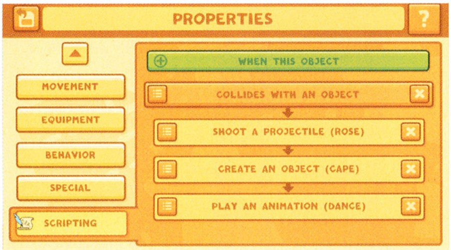
HEALTH: 80

APPLY GRAVITY ☑

WEIGHT: LION

BUOYANCY FLOATS

6. Determine the object's behavior by adjusting dozens of parameters.


PROPERTIES
MOVEMENT
EQUIPMENT
BEHAVIOR
SPECIAL
SCRIPTING

WHEN THIS OBJECT

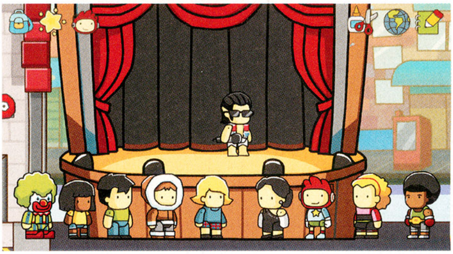
COLLIDES WITH AN OBJECT

SHOOT A PROJECTILE (ROSE)

CREATE AN OBJECT (CAPE)

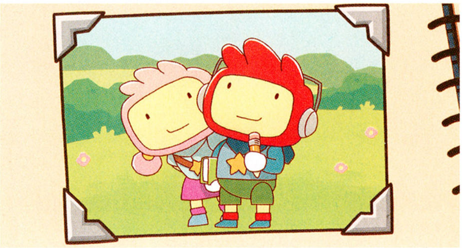
PLAY AN ANIMATION (DANCE)

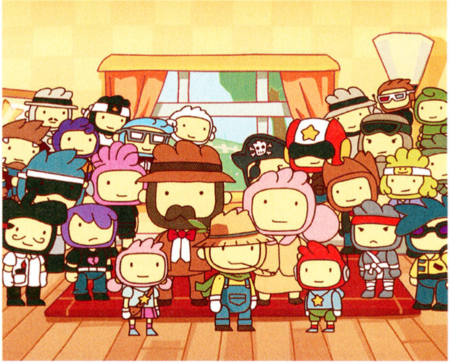
7. Full scripting lets you create simple but specific AI routines.



8. Finally, your creation is ready to make its debut!

A New Focus on Story





Past Scribblenauts games weren't too concerned about their stories—and to be perfectly honest, it wasn't something that ever felt necessary. But Scribblenauts Unlimited explains exactly who Maxwell is, where he got his magical notebook (the tool he uses to spawn that endless array of objects), and why he's collecting Starites to begin with.

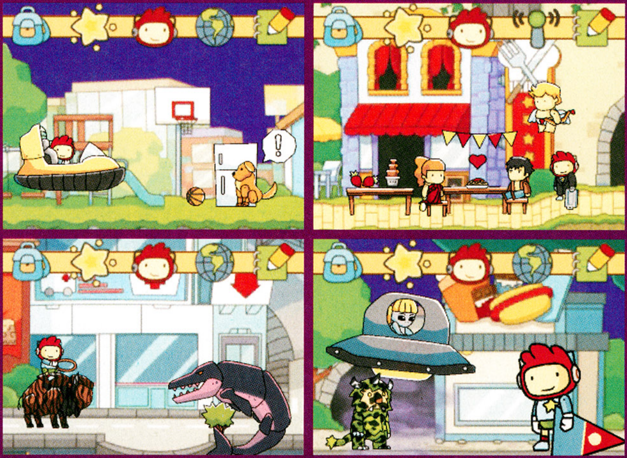
As it turns out, Maxwell comes from a pretty extensive family. He has a twin sister named Lily, as well as 40—yes, *40*—brothers. Maxwell's parents, Edgar and Julie, were both explorers before they settled down and had kids, and they gave each of their children a special magical gift that they acquired on their travels. Lily received a globe that let her instantly visit anywhere in the world, while Maxwell received a notebook that allowed him to create anything simply by writing it.

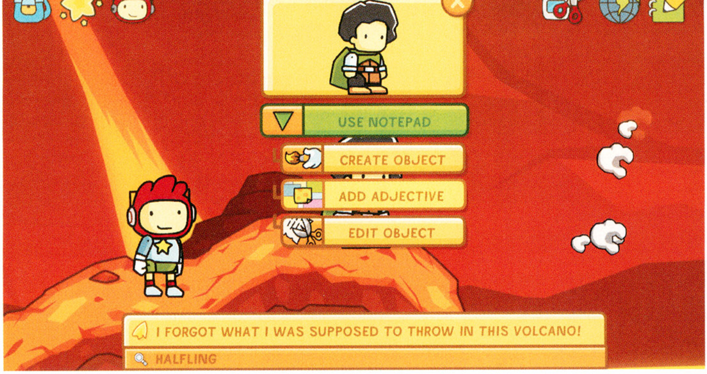
Unfortunately, having such powers made the children somewhat spoiled, and one day Maxwell decided to play a trick on a hungry beggar by conjuring and feeding him a rotten apple. Upon eating the revolting fruit, the beggar revealed himself to have magical powers of his own, and in retaliation he put a curse on Lily that caused her to start turning to stone. As luck would have it, Starites are the only things that can prevent the curse from overtaking Lily completely, and the only way to get Starites is by earning people's gratitude. Therefore, Maxwell has dedicated himself to using his notebook for good, and he's set out on a quest to travel the world (using Lily's globe) and collect enough Starites to put things right.

As for those 40 brothers? They're around, too. You'll come across them as you explore the game, and by completing the mission associated with each bro, you'll unlock them as playable characters. Just don't expect to use their special magical gifts; they're not discussed in this adventure.

MAXWELL GOES 3D

In addition to hitting Wii U, Scribblenauts Unlimited will be arriving on the Nintendo 3DS handheld. The N3DS version is nearly as robust as its console counterpart; it will contain the same missions, worlds, upgraded dictionary, and open-ended gameplay, plus it will include StreetPass functionality that will allow you to see what objects other players have used to overcome the game's challenges, as well as stereoscopic 3D enhancements for the cinematics. Unfortunately, the N3DS version will not offer the object editor.





I FORGOT WHAT I WAS SUPPOSED TO THROW IN THIS VOLCANO!

New Wordplay

Words have been at the core of Scribblenauts's gameplay since the beginning, so it's not surprising that there are cool new ways to use them in Scribblenauts Unlimited. Though it might not sound like much, the newfound ability to apply adjectives to existing objects adds a ton of creative flexibility to the game. Obviously, it's convenient to make an object and pile on any adjectives that come to mind (rather than re-create the item from scratch every time, as you had to do in Super Scribblenauts), but there are also strategic implications. If you're being attacked by a deranged dragon, for instance, you can modify it to be a harmless dragon or a sleepy dragon so you can slip past unscathed. You can also apply adjectives to Maxwell himself; a speedy, invincible, flying Maxwell will get you out of almost any sticky situation.

Of course, there are plenty of new and updated words you can use for your gaming pleasure. If you create and utilize a time machine you can turn on a sepia-toned grainy-film filter, and if you make an arcade game you'll give the graphics a retro-pixelated look. (A handheld video game makes the graphics pixelated and seaweed green, à la the original Game Boy.) You can equip Maxwell and NPCs with an assortment of wacky outfits, too, including a hot-dog suit, a frog suit, a hamburger suit, and a tanuki suit (which, indeed, lets you fly). Additionally, you can now designate your creations as male or female, which can lead to some pretty silly situations should you choose to spawn, say, a female Abraham Lincoln or a male grandma.

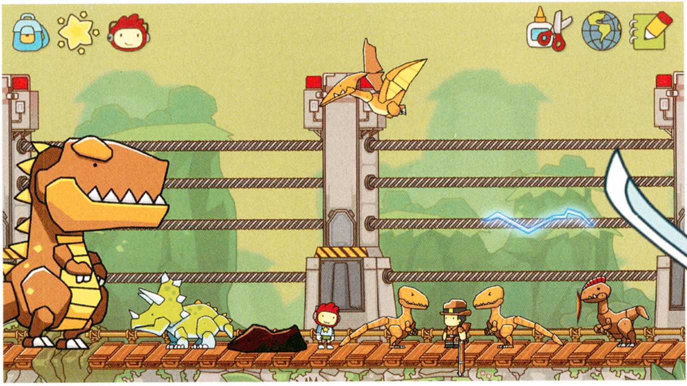
In fact, so far we've been hard-pressed to find things that Scribblenauts Unlimited *can't* do. The game is well on its way to living up to its name by providing players with nearly infinite options for creativity and a wide-open canvas on which to apply them. When the game hits Wii U later this year, you truly will be able to let your imagination run wild like never before.

EXPANDED VOCABULARY

30 of the New Words in Scribblenauts Unlimited

NOUNS:
Auto Shotgun
Bouncy House
Cat Burglar
Frog Suit
Hipster
Mullet
Potato Salad
Red Panda
Rubber Chicken
Sheriff Hat
Staple Gun
Suit of Armor
Tourist
Urinal
Wakeboard

ADJECTIVES:
Annoying
Argyle
Cedar
Dancing
Enveloping
Flatulent
Foutainlike
Gunned
Inflated
Minty
Mummified
Mustachioed
Ninja
Singing
Throwable



All for 'Naut

Nobody knows Scribblenauts better than 5th Cell chief executive officer and creative director Jeremiah Slaczka. We recently met with him in 5th Cell's spacious Bellevue, Washington-based office to get behind-the-scenes insights on the development of Scribblenauts Unlimited.

NINTENDO POWER What was the thought process you went through when you started making the third Scribblenauts?

JEREMIAH SLACZKA The first thing with that is it was originally a Wii project. We were just kind of prototyping, messing around, playing around with Wii, and it was actually kinda difficult. We didn't know if it made sense to do it on this platform because of the writing mechanic. Writing with a Control Pad or motion control is nowhere near as good as writing with a pen. And then Nintendo actually came to us—we were one of the first developers in North America to actually see Wii U—and they showed us a prototype of Wii U and said, "What do you think about this?" Interestingly enough, we and Warner Bros. were kind of messing around with the Wii version so this actually made a lot of sense. Obviously the GamePads were... really, really cool. So that's kind of how the impetus of the actual project started.

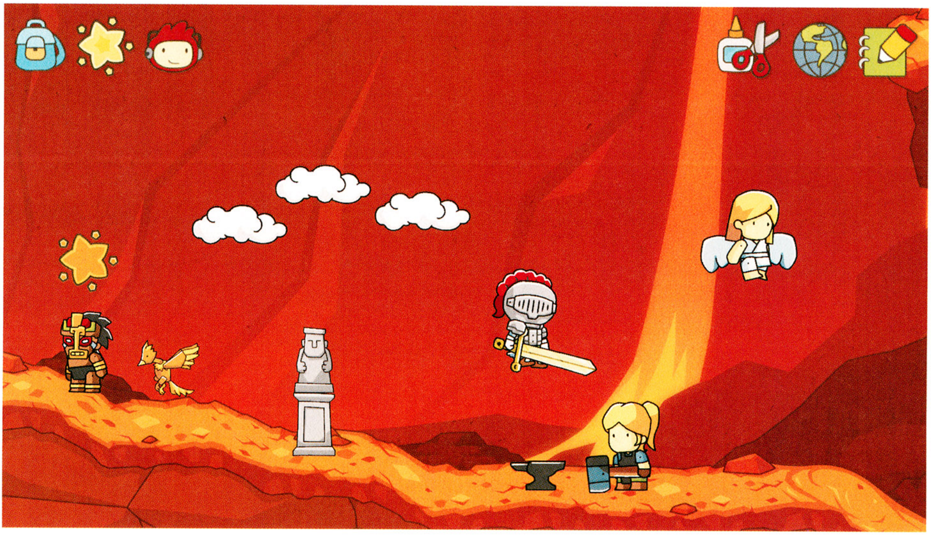
Then what we were doing with the project—specifically with the object editor—we've always kind of wanted to do that. But on the DS... the power just didn't exist. So with the Wii U, being as powerful as it was, we were like, "Hey, this idea of truly being able to write anything now can finally work on the Wii U." And then from there we were like, "Well let's also change the format of what the game is." We knew from the last two games...that a lot of people spend a lot of time in the playground mode and screwing around with the title screen. Well, if we know that, why not make every level kind of a playground? Make this one huge world that's interconnected with itself by just going from point to point.

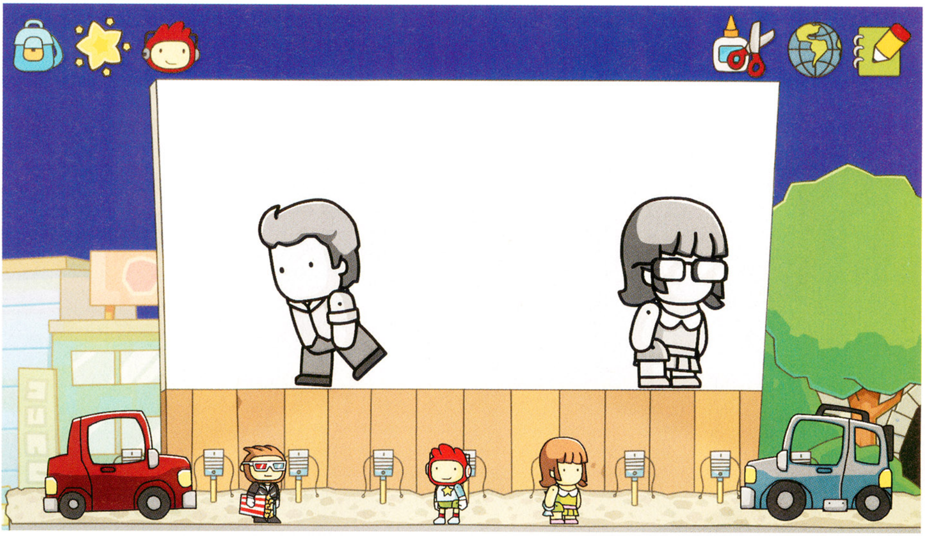
What makes this not just another sequel?

Obviously the object editor is huge; that's a completely new thing for Scribblenauts. And it's a really deep object editor, so you can go as simple as doing cosmetic edits, or you can go really, really deep and do some crazy stuff. Obviously we have new HD art which we're really proud of—so it looks really good—and the more open-world feel of smashing the playground together with the levels. I keep on calling it the "light and airy feel" of the game, because you kind of just go from point to point (or not). And if you just talk to a guy: "I'll help you." Or not, and just screw around. That's the feeling we were going for in this game. Also, there's object-sharing stuff. You can now create objects, and then download other people's objects; if there's some gap of a word we never thought of, you can create it and share it with your friends. So there are a lot of new features that are new to Scribblenauts.

Why'd you decide to include more of a story element this time?

I think everybody's always wondered where Maxwell came from, what his origin story is, and why he goes after Starites. The game has never been a story-heavy game. We wanted to continue that tradition by just having a little story to be like, this is why, this is what's going on, these are the characters—that sort of thing. Lily has actually been a character for a long time, internally; we've just never rolled her out. We were actually thinking of rolling her out for Super Scribblenauts, but we said no, we're not gonna roll her out. We actually came up with Lily in the original Scribblenauts—she just never came out until now.



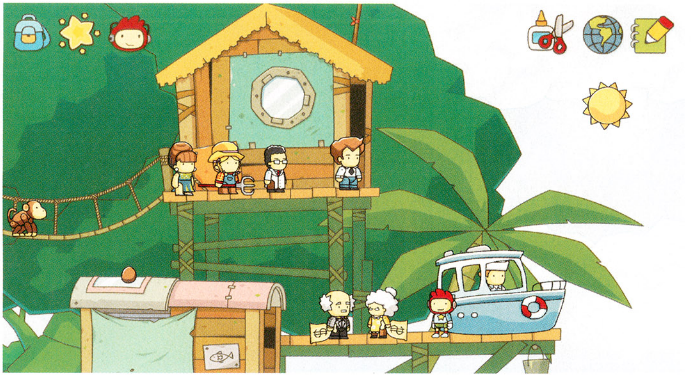


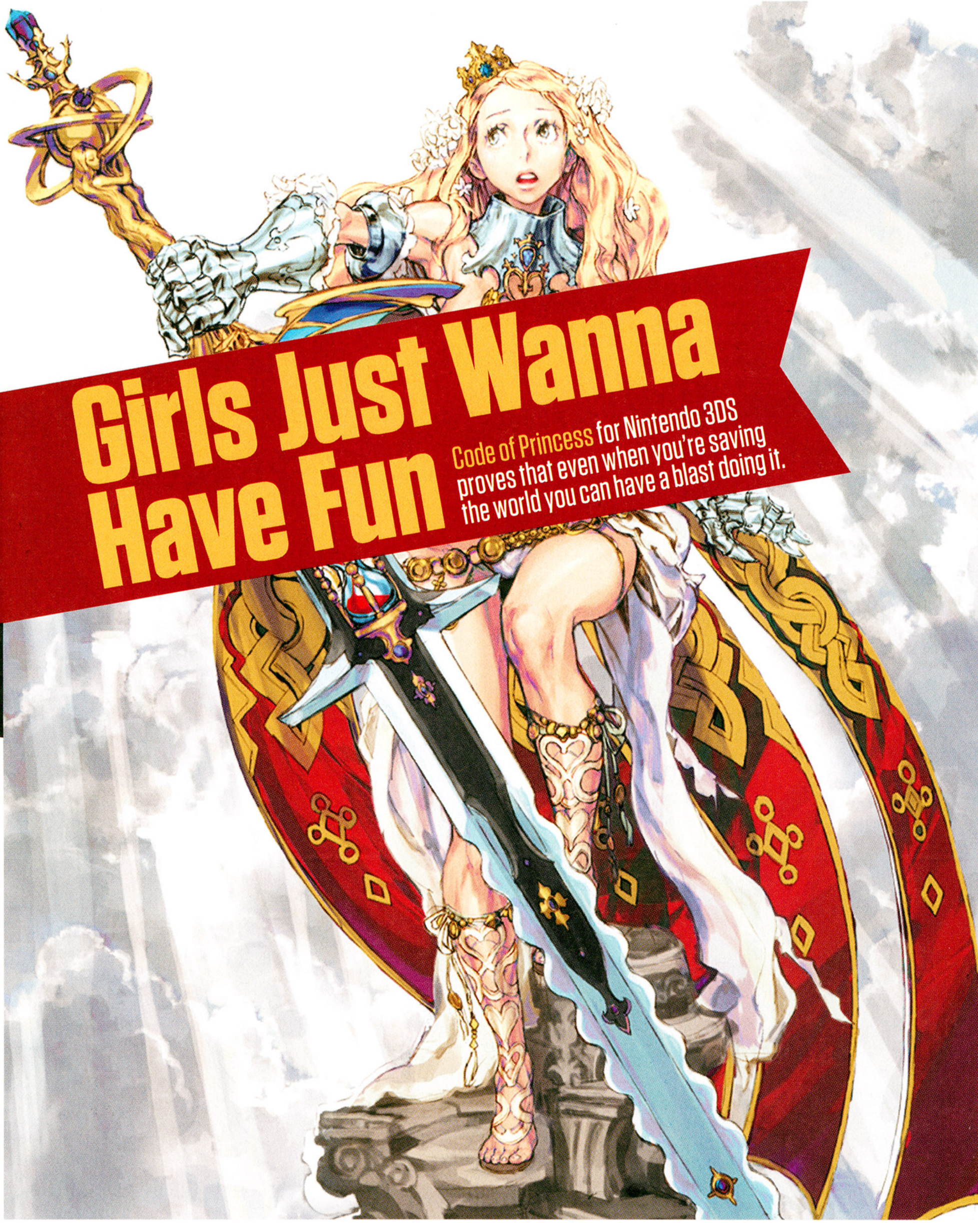
So during Scribblenauts and Super Scribblenauts was she just sitting there, waiting to be rescued?
Yup, she was just hangin' out. We talked about having a male and female Maxwell early on [when working on] Scribblenauts. We figured it made more sense with a new IP and all that we're doing to just be focused on a single character, instead of trying to push that out too much and confuse it. So we said, we'll just stick with Maxwell for a while. Lily's not "playable playable" in the sense that you don't play her story—she's just Maxwell's sister. And obviously with Lily we went crazy and talked about all of Maxwell's brothers and siblings—the 42. And that's part of the story—it's a little goofy and lighthearted. And that's part of what Scribblenauts is; it's kind of just a fun and goofy thing.

What was it like for you guys to adapt to the new level design for this game?
It was initially very challenging because first we have to come up with how the level layout is, and we have to work everything into that level layout. Before, the game layout and the puzzle itself were one-to-one—we made the level to fit the puzzle, and now we have these static, set level pieces, and they have to work within these constraints. So that was a new challenge, and then the other thing was how they riff off of each other within that world and within that frame, because before—especially in Super Scribblenauts—we didn't really have themes of levels. In Scribblenauts 1 we had themes and we found that sticking to themes that hardcore wasn't a good idea. The second one was looser; whatever goes. This one is kind of like that, but it merges both. There's a theme, but it's a very light theme.

How was it different for you guys to work on the Nintendo 3DS and Wii U as opposed to the DS?
There are a lot fewer constraints. That's why our water is way better now—we have more realistic water. We have all-new shaders, and stuff like God-rays coming through the Metaforest, and cool particle effects. There's a lot more going on in the game.

Why should you play this game if you weren't interested in (or grew tired of) previous Scribblenauts games?
We've greatly improved the formula of what Scribblenauts is. The core experience of using your imagination hasn't changed, but Scribblenauts Unlimited has a breadth of new and unique scenarios to solve, and fans will have lots of new content, and a storyline to advance through. Secondly, the object editor allows you to create anything you want, so in addition to all the known real or fantastical objects, you can create whatever your imagination desires. Finally, whether it's online object-sharing or solution-sharing via StreetPass, Scribblenauts fans will be connected to each other for the first time in the franchise!



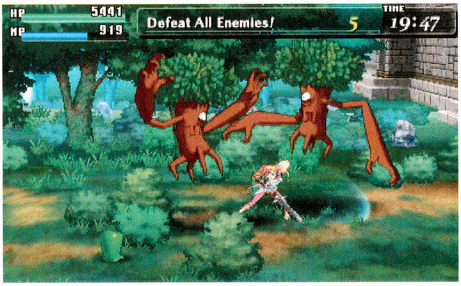


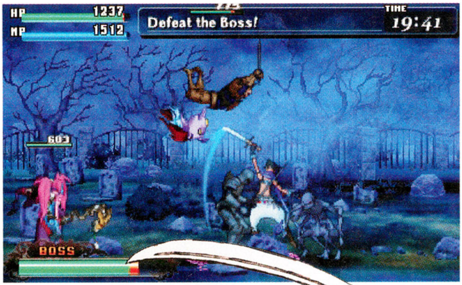
Girls Just Wanna Have Fun

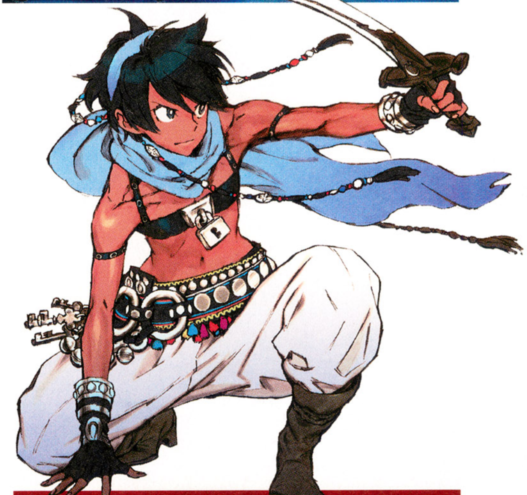
Code of Princess for Nintendo 3DS proves that even when you're saving the world you can have a blast doing it.

BY **CHRIS HOFFMAN**

PUBLISHER: **ATLUS** DEVELOPER: **AGATSUMA ENTERTAINMENT** RELEASE: **FALL 2012** **N3DS**







ALI

Once the leader of a group of bandits, Ali is a kind-hearted thief who relies on her speed and agility to survive. She has a complicated past.

Code of Princess for the Nintendo 3DS handheld is not a terribly serious game. Sure, it's got intense sword-swinging action, world-threatening apocalyptic plots, epic battle scenes, and tales of destruction and betrayal, but it's all presented with a spring in its step and a quirky sense of humor that keeps everything lighthearted even when the situation seems dire. Heck, all it takes is one look at protagonist Solange's attire—not exactly the most practical outfit for fighting an army of monsters—to realize that Code of Princess is a bit on the silly side. And that's fine by us. After all, if you're going to embark on an anime-style fantasy quest to save the world from destruction, you might as well make sure you have a good time.

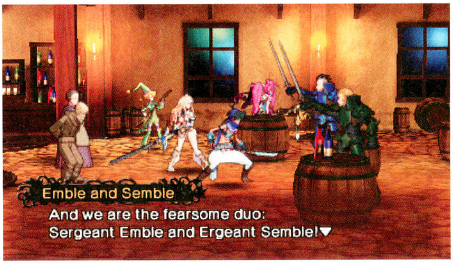
The adventure begins when the kingdom of DeLuxia is invaded by the Distron army. Pretending to be heroic monster-slayers, the Distrons manage to enter the capital city without any resistance, then proceed to decimate the royal castle with a massive explosion. Luckily for fans of blonde butt-kicking babes, Princess Solange survives the assault and is able to retrieve her family's most precious heirloom: the Deluxcalibur sword. The sword is said to contain incredible power, but it's highly sought after by the Distron troops; unable to overcome an entire army, Solange's only recourse is to flee.

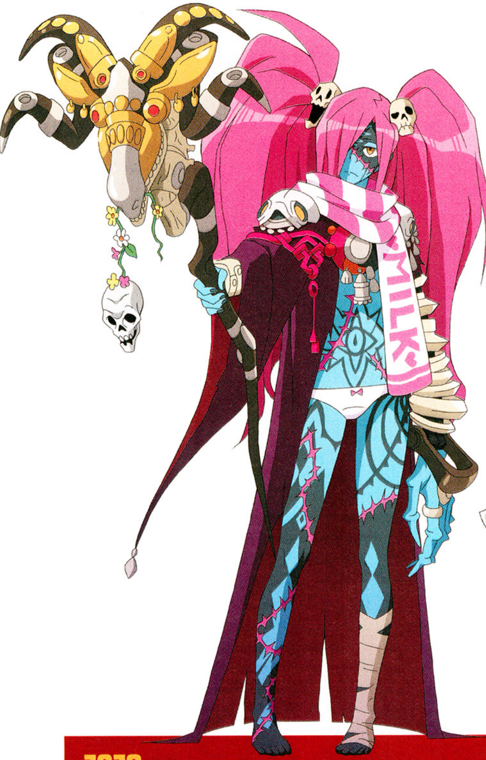
Fortunately, the princess isn't alone. She's quickly joined by tomboyish thief Ali (who you might think is a guy at first glance), and as the two of them make their way through a cemetery outside of town, they meet up with Zozo, a blue-skinned necromancer whose body is composed of various corpse parts. (Just don't call Zozo a zombie; she spends most of the game trying to convince people that she's not one.) Deciding that they need some diversity in their group, the three ladies enlist the help of Allegro, an Elvish bard/sage-in-training who wields a mean electric guitar. The quartet is an eclectic group for sure; these four characters form Code of Princess's primary cast, and their distinct personalities and bizarre interactions—they break into an impromptu dance number once Allegro joins the group, for example—help make the journey highly entertaining.

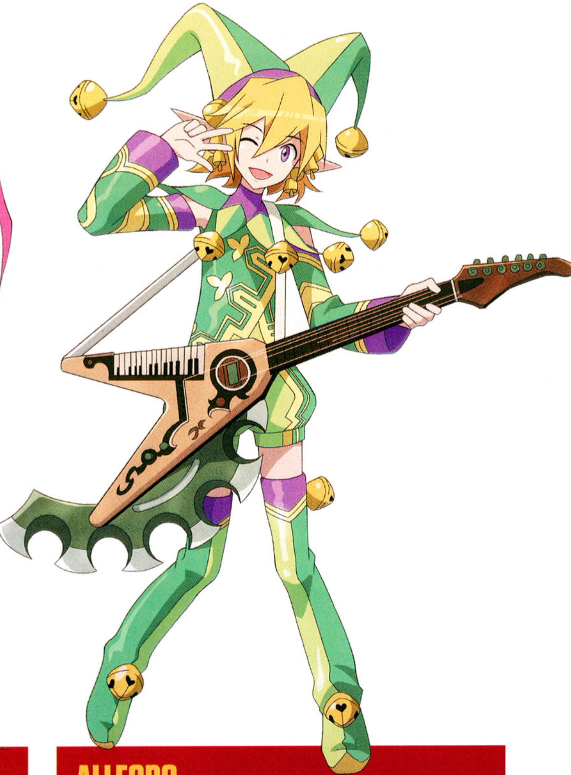
Things get only crazier from there. As Solange and her allies journey

SOLANGE

Good-natured and perhaps a little naïve, Solange is the princess of DeLuxia and heir to the Deluxcalibur sword. Her unique fashion sense belies impressive skills.


Emble and Semble
And we are the fearsome duo:
Sergeant Emble and Ergeant Semble!▼





ZOZO

Zozo is a necromancer inhabiting a body made up of...um... previously used parts. Since she has no tongue, she speaks through the skull on her staff.

ALLEGRO

This Elvish bard is rather infatuated with himself, and he isn't afraid to let everyone around him know it. He can use his electric guitar as an offensive weapon, and he's skilled at healing magic.

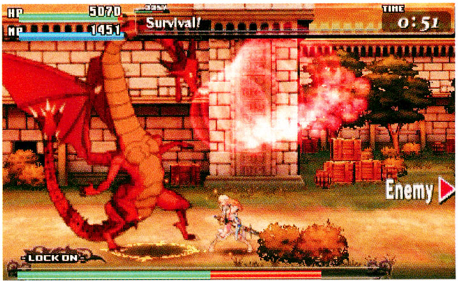
through villages, forests, and fields in an attempt to fight back against the Distron forces, they cross paths with all manner of weirdos and warriors, including a samurai who has a crush on the undead, a mace-wielding nun, a powerhouse fighter named Master T who channels the spirits of animals, and a talking kitty-cat merchant who's out to collect a debt owed by Allegro. And those are just the good guys; your enemies include a lovestruck ninja, twins named Emble and Semble who can't even tell themselves apart, a pink-haired little girl accompanied by an animated elephant skull, and the diabolical Distron queen—a woman named Distiny who walks around wearing bunny slippers and holding a stuffed rabbit.

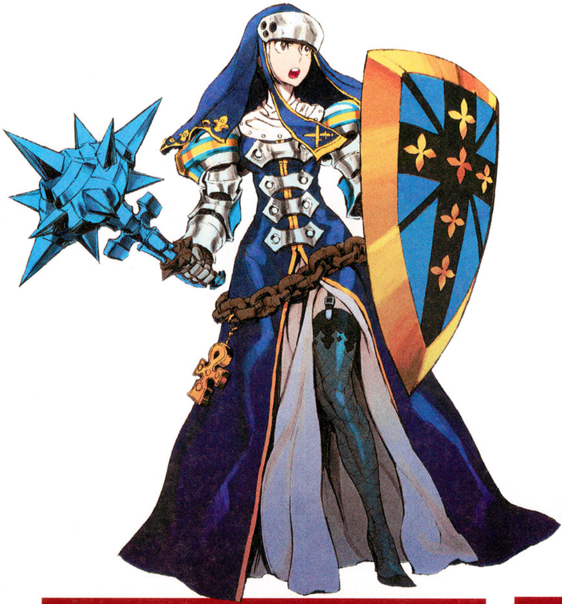
SWORDS AND SORCERY

Though the characters and situations can become pretty odd, the gameplay in Code of Princess remains solid throughout. The A and B buttons allow you to execute strong attacks and quick attacks, respectively, and

Juppongi

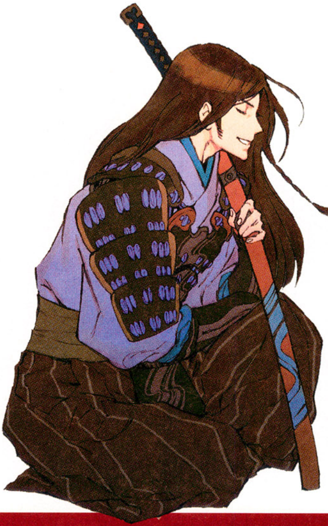
I always held back when we sparred. I held back... in the name of love!





SISTER HEL

This nun is not a lady to mess with. Equipped with a massive mace and a mighty shield, she's ready to punish evildoers in the strictest way possible.

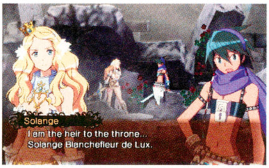


TSUKIKAGE

Master of the Intergalaxy Blade style of fighting, this samurai can effortlessly soar through the sky and slice through his foes. He'd like to date Zozo.

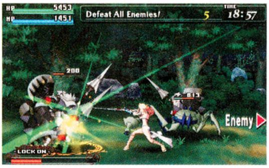
by inputting simple button combinations you can unleash powerful character-specific physical blows and/or MP-reliant magic assaults. Though you might not expect it given her slender build, Solange is the powerhouse of the group, able to easily chop through legions of foes with her ridiculously oversized sword. Ali relies on fast knife strikes and uses tricky weapons such as explosives and smoke bombs to confound enemies, while Zozo wields a variety of magical attacks (including electric blasts, massive fiery projectiles, and petrification spells). Allegro is the most balanced character in the game; he's competent with both physical attacks and magic, and he can use healing spells and other stat-boosting abilities to give himself and his allies an edge. (Strangely enough, he can also play dead.)

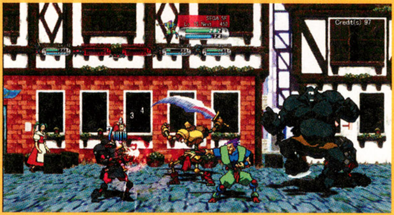
Adding further depth to the combat are a lock-on attack that allows you to dish out double damage when you focus on a specific enemy, and a burst attack that enables you to enter a temporary powered-up state at the expense of your MP. You'll also have to pay attention to your location on the play field; battles are spread across three 2D planes, and both you and your enemies can hop from one plane to another to avoid attacks or move into position for a strategic advantage.



Solange

I am the heir to the throne...
Solange Blanchefleur de Lux.

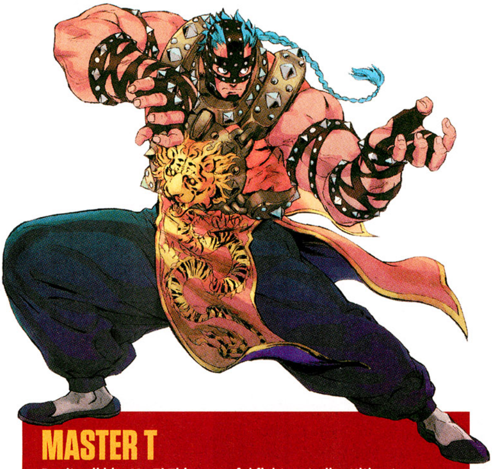




The Guardian Connection

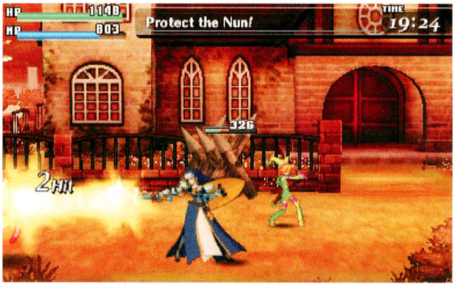
You don't have to look hard to see the similarities between Code of Princess and the Sega Saturn classic Guardian Heroes. From the hack-'n'-slash-meets-RPG gameplay to the three-planed play field to the wide variety of unlockable characters, nearly every element that made Guardian Heroes a cult hit can be found in Code of Princess. But Code of Princess isn't some shameless rip-off; it was actually designed by key members of the Guardian Heroes development team, including creative director Tetsuhiko "Han" Kikuchi.

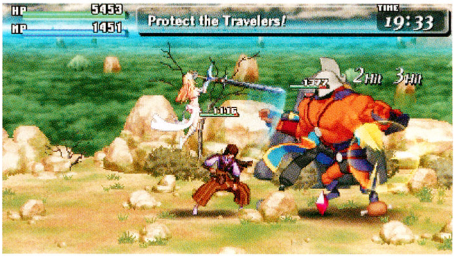
Despite the heavy emphasis on frantic action, you'll find a heaping dose of RPG elements, as well. As you slay foes and level up, you'll be able to customize your characters by augmenting stats in six categories—vitality (HP), piety (MP), attack, defense, mind (magic strength and protection), and speed—



MASTER T

Don't call him Mr. T! This powerful fighter studies Ultimate Manimal Arts and is able to call upon creatures such as the Heartbroken Badger, Frustrated Penguin, and Dire Chinchilla.

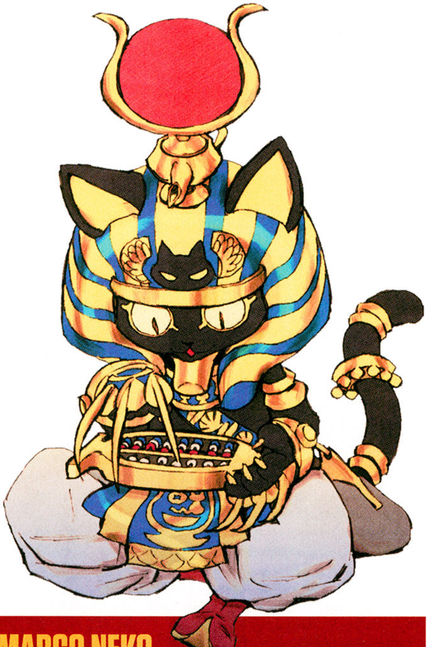




and using the cash you acquire after beating each stage, you'll be able to buy and equip a variety of weapons, shields, earrings, gauntlets, and helmets to further increase your power. The Dominion sword, for example, increases your HP, while a Venom Charm protects you from poison and Spirit Earrings let you deal more damage to high-level foes.

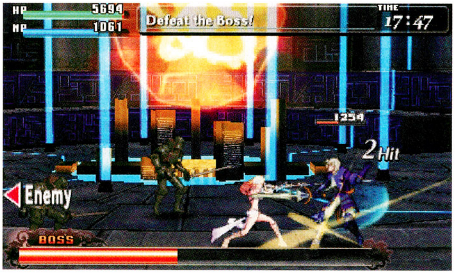
AND FAN SERVICE, TOO!

Complementing the story and gameplay is a bevy of impressive features, including absolutely stunning hand-drawn visuals, extremely detailed animation, appropriately over-the-top voice acting, and local and online multiplayer (both co-op and versus) for up to four participants. The game also boasts plenty of content; in addition to approximately 30 story missions (which are presented in bite-sized chunks, making them ideal for on-the-go gaming), you can engage in more than 40 bonus missions. You can even unlock more than 45 extra characters—essentially every enemy and supporting cast member in the game—and use them to tackle the bonus missions or replay stages in Free Play mode. Admittedly, it's a bit unusual to take control of a diminutive slime or silver-haired old woman and start mopping the floor with a bunch of knights, but then again, wild action and offbeat situations are what make Code of Princess so appealing. If you want to get in on the zaniness, start sharpening your blade—Atlus plans to release the game in North America this fall.



MARCO NEKO

Marco specializes in selling goods, not fighting enemies. Once you meet up with him, he'll aid you by providing a wide array of weapons, armor, and accessories—for a price.



"THE HISTORY OF LIGHT AND SHADOW WILL BE WRITTEN IN BLOOD!"

—GANONDORF, THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRINCESS, 2006

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MEDIA WITH PASSION

KIRBY™ 20TH ANNIVERSARY
20

A Pink to the Past

Kirby is turning 20 this year! Relive some of his greatest moments with Kirby's Dream Collection: Special Edition for Wii.

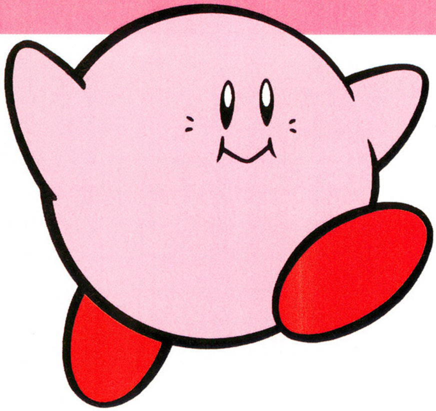
HE MAY LOOK ALL INNOCENT and childlike, but Nintendo's lovable puffball Kirby is now 20 years old. His anniversary is being celebrated with the release of this commemorative compilation of six of his early platforming adventures. Kirby's Dream Collection: Special Edition brings together games from the Game Boy, NES, Super NES, and Nintendo 64 along with plenty of bonus content.

That's not all that is included in this package. Fans will also receive an exclusive CD soundtrack and a collectible book about the spherical hero's history. Because we're so excited to relive Kirby's roots, we're taking an extended look at the six titles included in Kirby's Dream Collection and remembering all of the cool features that made us fall in love with the little guy in the first place.

BY **NP STAFF**

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** DEVELOPER: **HAL LABORATORY** RELEASE: **SEPTEMBER 2012**

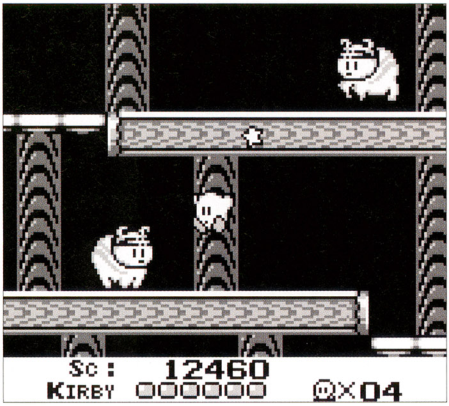
Wii



Kirby's Dream Land

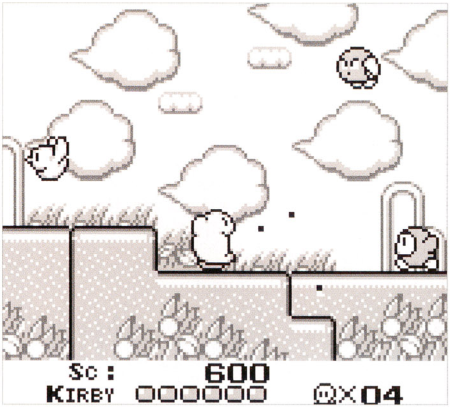
PLATFORM: **GAME BOY** YEAR: **1992**

Kirby's origins are strange. The character was created by developer HAL Laboratory as a placeholder sprite until something more defined would be put in its place. Originally known as Popopo, Kirby was finally called off the bench in the early '90s to help make the Game Boy an even more enticing purchase to fence-sitting gamers. Even though Kirby's Dream Land might seem simplistic by today's standards, it was monumentally influential and inventive in its time. Pretty surprising for a tiny little gray cartridge emblazoned with a smiling blob flying by a shocked tree



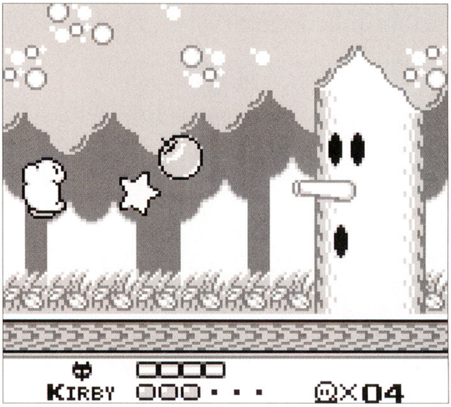
The Birth of a Legend

Kirby's Dream Land appeared on store shelves with modest fanfare despite being instantly accessible and a load of fun. The game felt fresh, original, and somehow vibrant even in two colors—at the time, we didn't even know Kirby was supposed to be pink! Also, Dream Land, as a setting, was first etched out here, and it has remained the backdrop for nearly all of the Kirby games to follow.



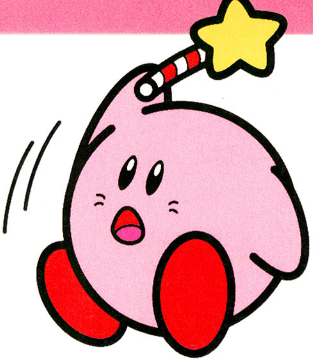
Suck It Up

The gluttonous Kirby never gains a single pound, perhaps because he doesn't actually swallow his enemies. He inhales an enemy or object, then can spit it back out as a star projectile. One of the series's hallmarks—Kirby vacuuming up enemies to acquire their abilities—wasn't in this first game.



Familiar Faces

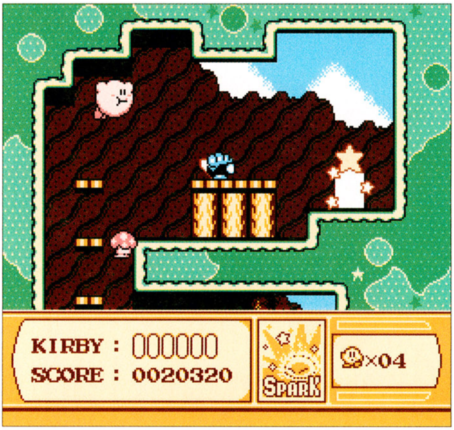
This being the first entry in what would become a long-running, beloved series, it makes sense that Kirby's Dream Land introduces a lot of mainstays that resurface in subsequent titles. Kirby's nemesis, King Dedede, makes his first of many appearances here, ruling with an iron wing and a wooden sledgehammer. Additionally, recurring characters such as Whispy Woods (the anthropomorphic tree shown on the cover) and Kracko (the spiked cloud with an eyeball) also debuted here.



Kirby's Adventure

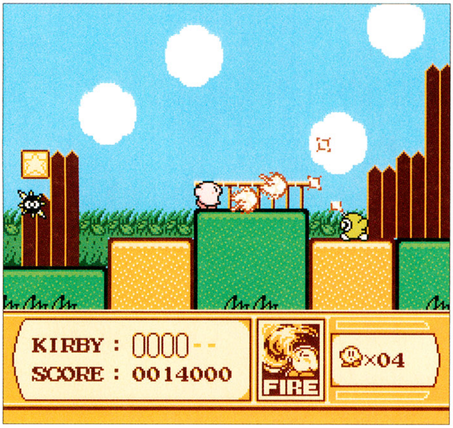
PLATFORM: **NES** YEAR: **1993**

Kirby may have been late to the NES party, but he sure knew how to have a good time. One of the last games released before Nintendo shifted its focus entirely to the Super NES, Kirby's Adventure became an instant classic, cementing the heroic pink puffball's hold on our heartstrings. His NES debut introduced the adorable protagonist's most iconic abilities and core elements that would carry on throughout much of the series. While plenty of memorable platformers hail from this era in Nintendo's history, Kirby's Adventure stood out as something completely fresh and unlike anything else on the system.



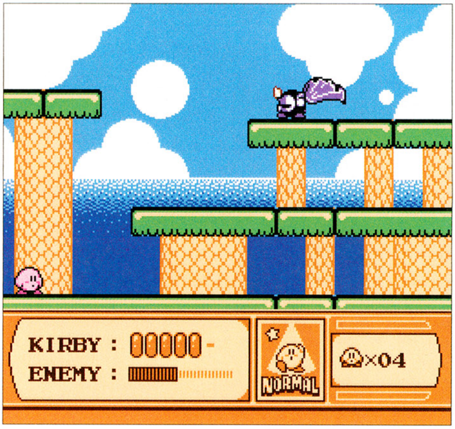
Pretty in Pink

Is he a marshmallow? A ghost? A sentient garbage disposal? We may still be up in the air about exactly what kind of creature Kirby is, but it wasn't until he appeared in the full-color Kirby's Adventure that we learned the little fellow was bright pink given that the box art for Kirby's Dream Land on Game Boy featured a pale, white Kirby. Pink isn't the manliest hue, but it's a good fit for his bubbly personality.



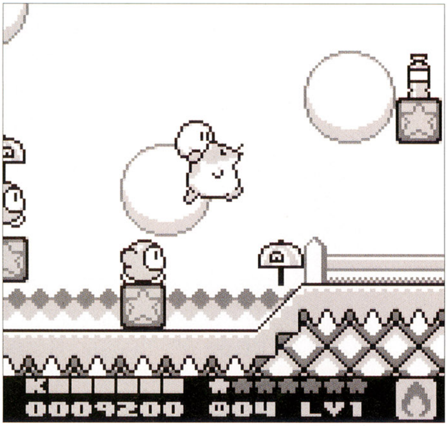
Copy That

Scarfing down baddies and barfing them back at their pals made for hilarious attacks in Kirby's original Game Boy outing, but Kirby's Adventure was the first game in the series that let you inhale foes and copy their abilities. This added a cool new dynamic to the unique platforming shenanigans, as swallowing certain foes let you swing a sword, shoot sparks, spit flame, transform into a rock, and wield many other rad abilities that were expanded in future Kirby games.



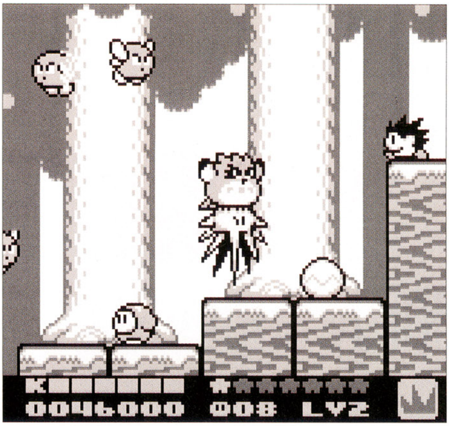
How Meta

Ah, the enigmatic Meta Knight. Kirby's Adventure marks the first ever appearance of Meta Knight in the franchise; he and Kirby duke it out in the final stage of Orange Ocean. Curiously, underneath all that cool gear, Meta Knight looks like a blackened mirror image of Kirby. While this mysterious character—Good? Bad?—became a major player in future games, his time in the NES limelight was brief indeed.



Rick's Helpful Tricks

What's better than a large, adorable, and friendly hamster? One that lets Kirby ride on his back while offering such perks as vaulting from wall to wall, bashing nearby foes, and remaining steady and upright on slippery surfaces. Due to his heft, Rick cannot float through the air like the series star, which gives his stages a unique feel. The hamster remains a fan-favorite ally, even appearing as a trophy in Super Smash Bros. Melee.



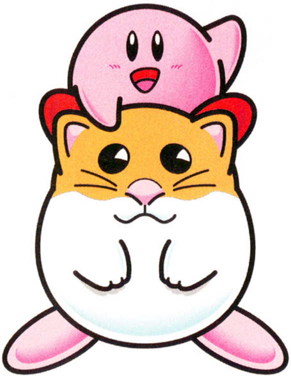
One Coo Owl

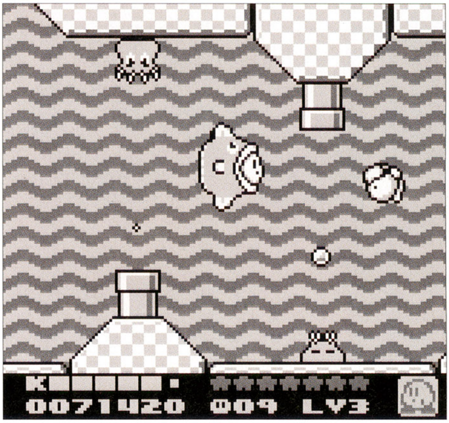
Who? Who? Coo is Kirby's helpful owl friend, of course, and the fluffy bird can be counted upon to keep the hero afloat through heavy gusts and to enable Kirby's inhalation ability while in flight. The duo's combined abilities—such as the Cutter, which launches boomerangs in various directions, and Spark, which shoots a blast of electricity downward—provide a serious aerial advantage to the pink protagonist.

Kirby's Dream Land 2

PLATFORM: **GAME BOY** YEAR: **1995**

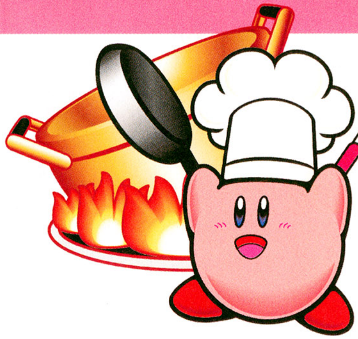
It might be a sequel, but Kirby's Dream Land 2 deviated significantly from the formative original. Not only did it add the ability-copying feature from Kirby's Adventure on NES, but it also introduced a trio of helper animals—Rick the Hamster, Coo the Owl, and Kine the Ocean Sunfish—that aid the pink puffball's journey with enhanced abilities as he aims to defeat the evil Dark Matter across seven areas. The game proved a big success on the original Game Boy, and was subsequently optimized for the Super Game Boy to include a multicolored presentation and themed border.





Our Kine of Friend

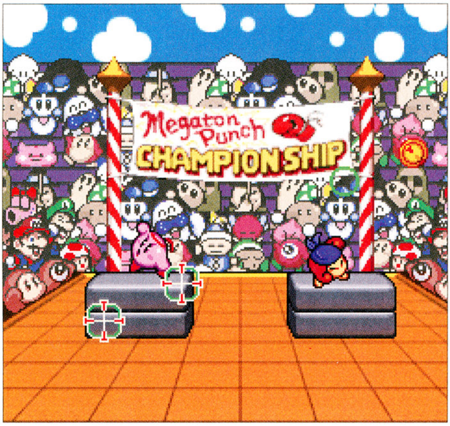
Kirby can hold his own in the most basic of underwater situations, but when it comes to pushing through strong currents and continuing to inhale everything in sight, he needs an assist from his seafaring friend, Kine the Ocean Sunfish. Paired with Kirby, Kine can flex skills such as utilizing a light bulb to illuminate darkened areas or donning a spiky exterior to bash through foes. He's not terribly useful on land, but when you need an aquatic ally, Kine is king.



Kirby Super Star

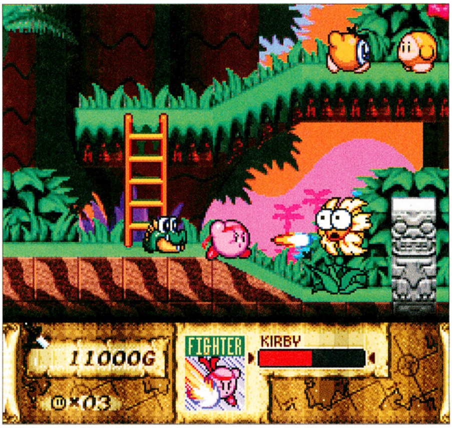
PLATFORM: SUPER NES YEAR: 1996

Kirby Super Star takes a different tack than previous series entries: instead of one single adventure, this game offers nine different diversions, ranging from minigames to beefier adventures to an all-out fight.



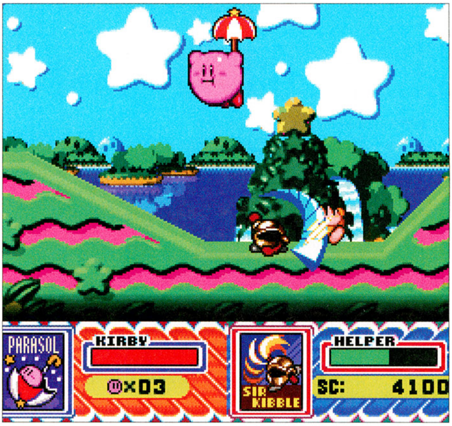
Viva Variety

Kirby Super Star is a colossal value for the price. The minigames comprise Gourmet Race (try to beat King Dedede to the finish line while wolfing down food), Samurai Kirby (a kendo-style game where you must attack faster than your opponent), Megaton Punch (you try to get the highest score possible), and Spring Breeze (which is essentially an abridged remake of Kirby's Dream Land). The longer games available are Revenge of Meta Knight (you must destroy Meta Knight's ship, the Halberd, before your enemy decimates Dream Land), Dyna Blade (Kirby must stop the titular huge bird from gobbling up all of Dream Land's crops), The Great Cave Offensive (a giant Metroid-style treasure hunt in a huge map), and Milky Way Wishes (Kirby must go into outer space to stop opposing forces from destroying Planet Pop Star). There's also a secret ninth game called The Arena. It's a Smash Bros.-style brawler in which you endure a series of boss battles, ultimately facing off against every boss from the game.



Sweet 16

As the series's first foray onto the 16-bit Super NES, Kirby Super Star upped the graphical ante. An astonishing amount of depth, shading, and detail was injected into the humble little series that started on the Game Boy. After all, if your hero lives in Dream Land, it sure as heck better be dreamy to look at, right?



Help Is On the Way

Even though Kirby is always the star, a second player can join in as a co-op helper—handy, given that some of the available helper characters have access to powers Kirby doesn't.

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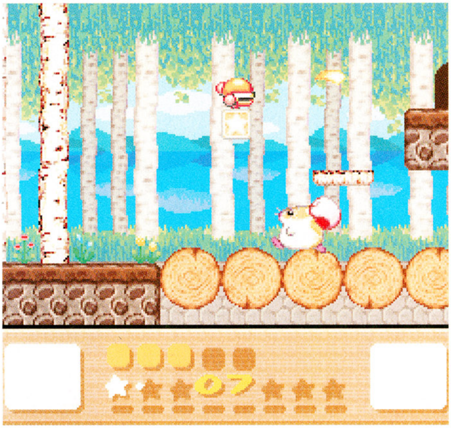
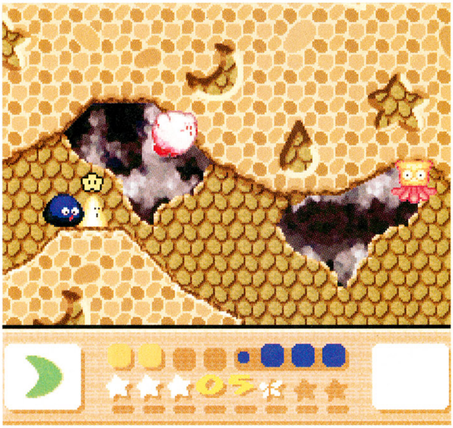


Dreamy Visuals

Though the Nintendo 64 had been out for more than a year when the company's Super NES swan song shipped, Kirby's Dream Land 3 still managed to make a strong aesthetic impression via its fantastic visual style, which made the world seem like it was rendered with crayons and colored pencils. The game also utilized the Super NES's "pseudo-high-resolution" mode to blend nearby pixels to great effect, resulting in a crisp and colorful late-16-bit-era affair for Kirby fans.



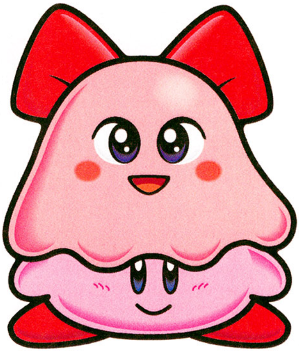
Sticky Situations

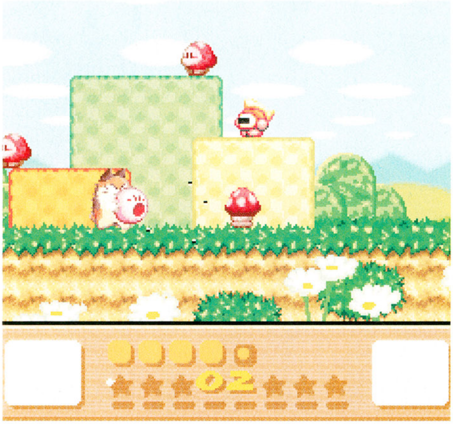
Gooey first appeared in Kirby's Dream Land 2, but it wasn't until the Super NES trilogy-capper that he became a prominent ally. Composed of Dark Matter, he can be called upon at any time at the expense of one square of Kirby's health, though the benefit of having another enemy-ingesting hero onscreen may warrant that sacrifice. Gooey can be controlled by a second player, or used in single-player with the computer controlling his actions.

Kirby's Dream Land 3

PLATFORM: **SUPER NES** YEAR: **1997**

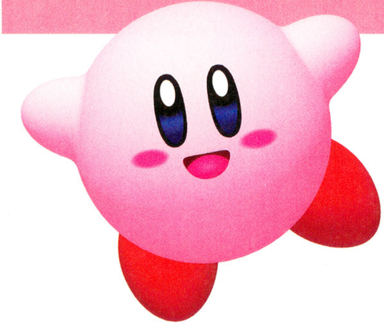
For its final numbered entry, Kirby's Dream Land made the leap from the Game Boy to the Super NES, with a colorful side-scroller that maintained the helper animals and ability-copying of its predecessor while adding new pals and fantastic art design. The game introduced three allies and allows a second player to control Gooey, a beneficial blue blob that can defeat nearby foes. Released in November 1997, Kirby's Dream Land 3 was the last first-party Super NES game published in the US.





Additional Allies

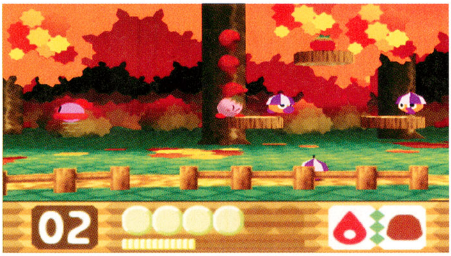
Rick, Coo, and Kine all return from Dream Land 2, but Kirby isn't content to simply adventure with old pals. Included in Kirby's Dream Land 3 are a trio of fresh friends: Nago, a lumbering feline who rolls Kirby like a ball and can triple-jump; Pitch, a green bird carried by Kirby that speedily runs and soars through the air; and Chuchu, a bow-wearing pink blob that can hang from and wander upon ceilings. As usual, all three also modify Kirby's various abilities.

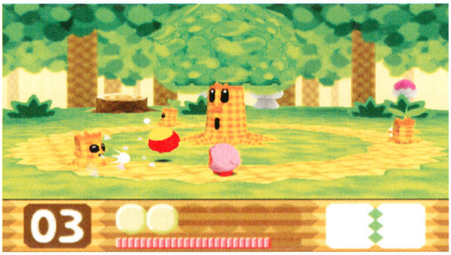


Kirby 64: The Crystal Shards

PLATFORM: N64 **YEAR:** 2000

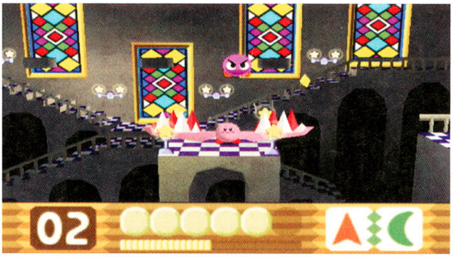
Can you believe that it took four years from the N64 launch for Kirby to star in his own title on the console? The wait was worth it, however, as Kirby 64: The Crystal Shards brings some fun new additions to the franchise while retaining the classic gameplay that made the games so popular. In this adventure, Kirby must fight to save the planet Ripple Star when it comes under attack by a creature known as 02. The only way to save the day is by recovering the dozens of pieces of a magic crystal that can drive away the evil forces.

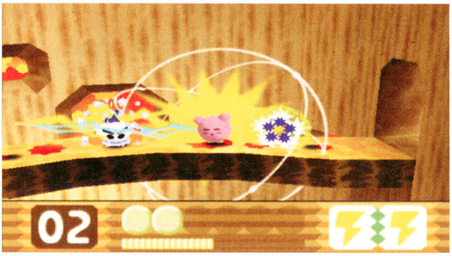


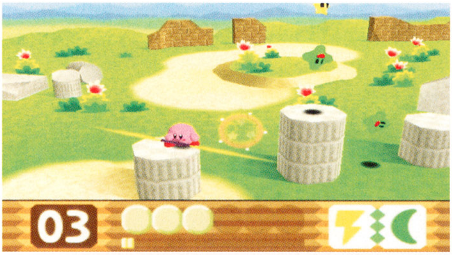


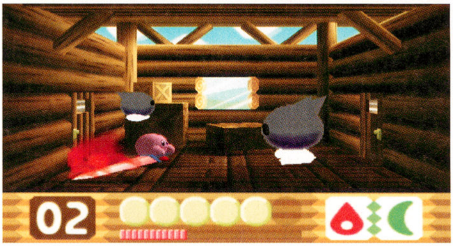
A New Perspective

The Crystal Shards was the first Kirby game on a system that could easily produce 3D graphics, so it should come as no surprise that the series's sprite-based visuals were replaced with polygons for this game. Kirby and company made the transition to 3D quite well, and thanks to the colorful, simple design, the game still looks good today. To show off the new look, the game's camera doesn't stick to the usual side-scrolling perspective–it often pans a bit as you move through a level, allowing you to see the action from multiple angles.









Our Powers Combined

Kirby's trademark move is to inhale his enemies and steal their powers. A lot of the fun in his games is in experimenting with the different techniques and seeing which ones are most effective in various situations. In Crystal Shards, Kirby has learned a new trick–he can combine his foes' abilities. To do so, simply expel a power-up once you have swallowed a bad guy. The resulting star can then be tossed at another villain. If that villain gives up a new skill, it merges with the power-up you expelled and creates a more powerful attack for Kirby. Merge the Needle and Stone attacks, for instance, and Kirby gains a massive drill that can bore through walls. Of course, you need certain abilities to reach secret areas, so you'll have to do some experimentation to find everything the game has to offer.

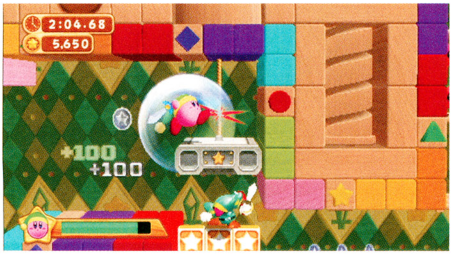
Special Features

You might think that six classic games would be enough to commemorate Kirby's 20th anniversary, but there's even more fun included in this Dream Collection. These bonuses will keep the celebration going long after King Dedede has thrown in the towel.

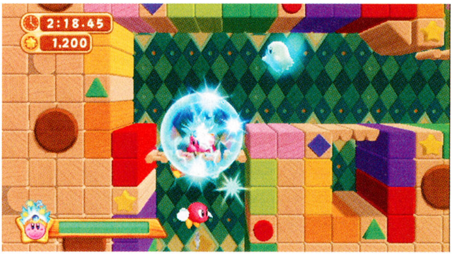
New Challenge Stages

Remember those tricky Challenge Rooms from Kirby's Return to Dream Land? Kirby's Dream Collection features several all-new obstacle courses like those to test your copy-ability skills. In each room Kirby is granted a power, and you'll have to take full advantage of its moves to make it through the stage and earn the best score. After completing each challenge, you can replay it against a ghost of your best time. There are three levels with four stages each (including one based on Super Smash Bros.). Here's a peek at the first level.

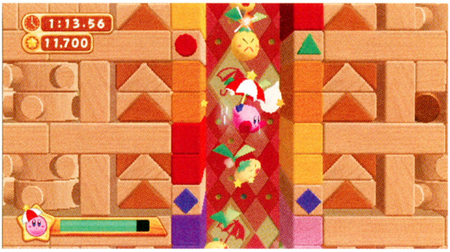
Level 1: Happiness Hall



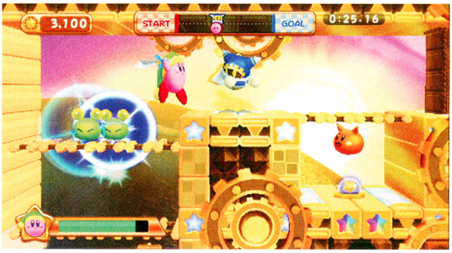
SWORD CHALLENGE
Kirby dons a Link-esque cap and uses a sword to slice his way through this stage. This versatile weapon has multiple attacks that slash through your enemies.



SPARK CHALLENGE
When Kirby is charged with the electric Spark ability, he generates a force field that instantly wipes out most foes. He can also use lightning to zap above or below him.



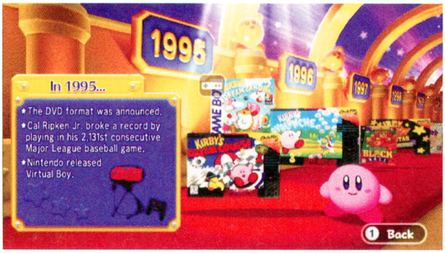
PARASOL CHALLENGE
It may not look like much, but this tiny umbrella packs a wallop. Not only can it block falling objects, but it can also dive-bomb enemies and dash past spikes.



MAGOLOR RACE 1
The alien Magolor made his debut in the Wii title Kirby's Return to Dream Land, and he reappears here to challenge Kirby to a race. Dodge his attacks as you dash ahead.

Kirby's History

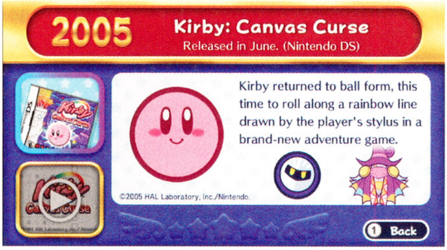
Video game historians will appreciate the interactive timeline that allows Kirby to walk through a virtual museum of his past adventures. Here's what you can expect to find on this tour.


In 1995...

- The DVD format was announced.
- Cal Ripken Jr. broke a record by playing in his 2,131st consecutive Major League baseball game.
- Nintendo released Virtual Boy.

HISTORY TIMELINE

Each year shows the cover for any Kirby titles released during those 12 months, along with a few interesting trivia facts (not all of them video game-related).

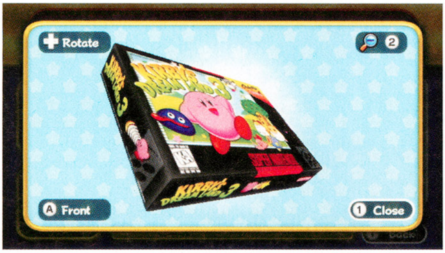

2005 Kirby: Canvas Curse
Released in June. (Nintendo DS)

Kirby returned to ball form, this time to roll along a rainbow line drawn by the player's stylus in a brand-new adventure game.

©2005 HAL Laboratory, Inc./Nintendo.

GAME DETAIL

By having Kirby inhale one of his games, you're taken to this screen that gives a few more details about the title. You can also watch a trailer for the game, or—if the game is included in the collection—jump right into playing it.



BOX ART

Within the game details, you can take a closer look at the box art. The packaging has been fully rendered in 3D, so you can zoom in and out and rotate the boxes to see them from any angle.

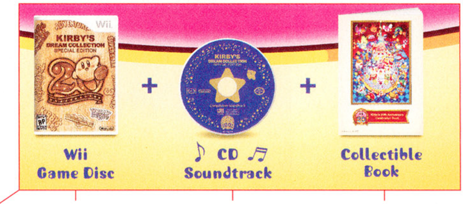
KIRBY: RIGHT BACK AT YA!

Kirby's animated series debuted in the US in 2002 and ran for 100 episodes. Three complete episodes (numbers 1, 60, and 72) have been included here.

Physical Goodies

Like the Super Mario All-Stars Limited Edition package before it, Kirby's Dream Collection includes a handful of bonus goodies for the hardcore fans.

Wii
KIRBY'S 20TH ANNIVERSARY
20
KIRBY'S DREAM COLLECTION SPECIAL EDITION



Wii GAME DISC

The cover art for the game disc looks as though it were carved into wood. It's an homage to Kirby Super Star's Japanese box art, which sported a similar look.

CD SOUNDTRACK

So far, Nintendo hasn't revealed which tunes will be on this exclusive soundtrack CD. We expect to see a selection from throughout the series.

COLLECTIBLE BOOK

Just in case you haven't gotten enough Kirby history in the Dream Collection itself, this book will feature pictures and facts that fans will appreciate.

62

Power Profiles

DATE OF BIRTH
March 7, 1971

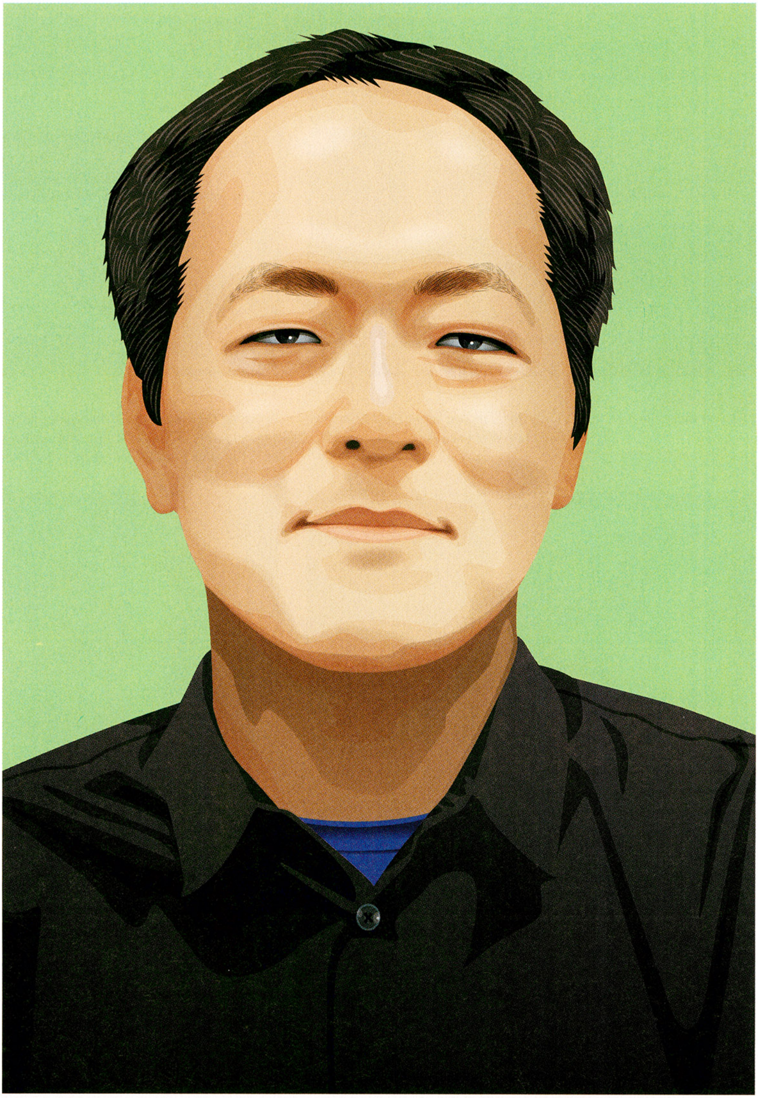
BIRTHPLACE
Kawaguchi City, Saitama province, Japan

POSITION
Director/senior manager, Marvelous AQL Inc.

BEST KNOWN FOR
Developing action games for Sonic Team and RPGs for Mistwalker

FAVORITE FOOD
Unagi (eel) bowl

CURRENT PROJECTS
King of Pirates, Soul Sacrifice



Takuya Matsumoto

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTINA EMPEDOCLES

Working alongside industry luminaries such as Sonic co-creator Yuji Naka and Final Fantasy creator Hironobu Sakaguchi, Takuya Matsumoto has helped put smiles on the faces of many Japanese-gaming enthusiasts. Matsumoto was initially a programmer for Sega, using his skills to contribute to action titles such as Sonic Adventure, NiGHTS into Dreams, and Burning Rangers, but over the years his job and duties have evolved. Since leaving Sega, he has frequently found himself in the director's chair, and these days RPGs have become his calling card. After developing many games for competing platforms, Matsumoto's work has recently begun appearing on Nintendo systems, the most notable example being the action-packed RPG The Last Story.

NINTENDO POWER
How did you get into the video game business?
TAKUYA MATSUMOTO
I've been interested in programming since my elementary-school days, but when I was in college I really wanted to go into the gaming industry. That was the same time I saw Sonic the Hedgehog—the first one. I was blown away by it, and that was the type of game that I wanted to work on, and I got into Sega.

When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?
I grew up in the "Gundam Generation," hoping to defend the Earth as a mech pilot. But even in my youth, I suspected that it might be a while before 18-meter-tall giant robots became a reality, so I switched to dreaming about piloting actual war machines. I was particularly taken with the F-15 Eagle, and remember having someone buy me an F-15 Eagle model kit when I was only five or six years old and way too young to actually build it.

What was it about Sonic the Hedgehog that you found so appealing?
I fell in love the first time I laid eyes on it and became addicted the first time I played it. I was a student when Sonic 1 came out, and in those days I spent a lot of time playing games with my friends, but it was a major point of personal pride that I was the one who owned the Sega console that could play Sonic the Hedgehog. Nowadays, I love driving, and I suspect that interest comes from my obsession with having to make snap judgments during the high-speed action of Sonic the Hedgehog. Incidentally, did you know that Sonic was the mascot of legendary US Air Force test pilot Chuck Yeager?

What was it like to be a fan of Sonic Team's work and then to find yourself as part of that team?
I first met Sonic at the 1991 Tokyo Toy Fair, and joined Sonic Team in 1994. In the three years in between, I studied computer programming with a fanatical fervor. I'll never forget the day, in my second year at Sega, when my boss told me, "Sonic Team is moving back to Japan from America. Want to join them?" That was perhaps the most magical moment of my entire life. I should pay my respects once again to that boss, Mr. Nagata, who died tragically at a very young age.

Sonic Team seemed to be especially creative during the Saturn era. What was it like being a part of that?
The original members of Sonic Team, who had made Sonic 2, Sonic 3, and Sonic & Knuckles in America, and then Sonic CD back in Japan, reunited to challenge the next-generation hardware of the Sega Saturn. It was like that movie *The Right Stuff*. As the youngest member of the team, I was deeply inspired by the experience. It really did feel like we were astronauts aiming for the stars.

NiGHTS was pretty great. What are some of your fond memories of working on the game?
I remember the piece of paper on which Mr. [Yuji] Naka sketched out the idea for the game on a flight back from the United States. I remember how Mr. [Naoto] Oshima based the visual design on the Cirque du Soleil production Mystère. I remember Takashi Iizuka's original scenario for the game (although that got cut), and the "bats on the path" idea that everyone got excited about (that got cut too). I remember how Mr. [Shigeru] Okada proposed the game be titled Soar, and how people complained the names of the characters were too old-fashioned.... I have so many memories about NiGHTS!

On a personal level, I created the system that changed the background music based on the gameplay. I had loved working on sound management since even before I was hired by Sega, and I had a lot of fun working out that mechanic with the rest of the sound team.

But I do have plenty of regrets, as well. I got way too swept up in the development of the game.... I was so young and inexperienced at the time. I know I must have been a pain in the butt to Mr. Naka and Mr. Oshima, and for that, I am truly sorry.

During the Saturn days, was there any pressure to create Sonic titles instead of working on original properties?
It wasn't so much a matter of external pressure as it was the fact that Sonic was a very special property to everyone, and we weren't sure what to do with him during the difficult transition from 2D to 3D. Looking back on it now, developing games like NiGHTS and Burning Rangers may have been our way of groping around for a solution to the Sonic problem.

Was the Saturn as difficult to program for as the rumors suggest? What were some of the unique challenges you had to overcome while working on games for the system?
In terms of dealing with the CD-ROM, I don't think it was so bad. It had a lot more memory than the Sega Genesis did, and it was the last machine in which you could do everything in assembly

GAMEOGRAPHY

Matsumoto got his start at Sega as part of the renowned Sonic Team. He worked on several titles for the Sega Saturn and Dreamcast before leaving Sega. More recently he's been working closely with Hironobu Sakaguchi to redefine the role-playing genre.

RISTAR
1995, SEGA GENESIS
EFFECTS PROGRAMMER

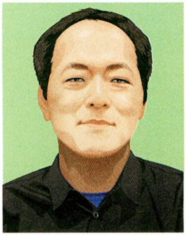
6
107
50
60
480
7 Link

NIGHTS INTO DREAMS...
1996, SEGA SATURN
SENIOR PROGRAMMER

CHRISTMAS NIGHTS
1996, SEGA SATURN
SENIOR PROGRAMMER

BURNING RANGERS
1998, SEGA SATURN
PROGRAMMER

Power Profiles



language, so the Saturn was a very special piece of hardware to me. I wasn't really in a position to compare it to the PlayStation, but I guess building the rendering engine for Burning Rangers was pretty rough. It was hard work making graphics that could compete.

What prompted you to leave Sonic Team and go to Artoon?
I left when Sega split into multiple development studios. I wanted to be in a position to be a part of everything, so I transferred to positions in library development and audio management, but I ended up realizing that I'd rather make games. At that point...Artoon was in a position to work on [next-gen] development, [so] I went over to them. And much of the studio's appeal came from the fact that two of my favorite developers, Naoto Oshima and Manabu Kusunoki, were a part of it.

How did you end up working with Hironobu Sakaguchi and eventually becoming involved with The Last Story?
After leaving Sega...that was right at the time when Mr. Sakaguchi and Microsoft were talking about wanting to make an RPG together. There were two titles—one was Lost Odyssey, which was done by FeelPlus, and the other one was Blue Dragon, which was done by Artoon. I became the development director for that title.

Recently you've been known for working on RPGs, which are quite a bit different from the types of games you were working on at Sega. Was there a reason for the change? Do you prefer working on RPGs or action titles?
I'm actually a big RPG fan, and played a ton of tabletop RPGs like D&D and Traveller when I was in high school. When I joined Sega, they were making RPGs like Panzer Dragoon Saga in the next room over, and I was always very jealous. In fact, my first game proposal was for a "fortune-telling RPG" designed to appeal to girls.

That said, I think I'm better suited to making action games. When I see a new game, the first thing I focus on is the way the character moves; I was particularly taken by Sonic, of course, as well as the then-spectacular 3D movement in the first Tomb Raider and Alone in the Dark games. That's one way in which I think my training with Sonic Team heavily influenced the way I approach games.

What do you find appealing about RPGs?
What I look for in an RPG is having a good script and world design brought to life, and seeing how the decisions that a player makes at crucial moments are reflected in the game.

> *"When I see a new game, the first thing I focus on is the way the character moves..."*

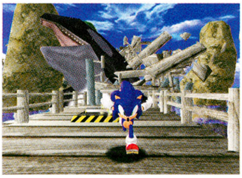
There are lots of interesting, innovative features in The Last Story. Which would you say is the most significant?
Thank you very much. I would say it's the way that players never feel alone, due to little things like nonplayable characters engaging in trifling conversation during battles. I think that really reflects the mood of the game's development; I was able to move forward because I could always feel that Mr. Sakaguchi and the other team members were close to me.

Who's your favorite character in The Last Story? And what character in the game is most like you?
Naturally, my favorite character is Syrenne! She was the favorite of pretty much everyone on the team, so we were always fighting over her. Don't ask. As for who I resemble most...Calista, due to her habit of fighting hopeless battles. And to the Calista fans out there, I am truly sorry if that ruins her for you.

As the development lead on the title, how did you share creative duties with Mr. Sakaguchi?
If you think about it in a grand scale—the whole scenario, the world view, each character's unique characteristics—that was all Mr. Sakaguchi. I was more involved with what happens within the dungeons—what each character is feeling, what feelings are happening at that scene. Are they scared? Are they happy? What's going on? It could be described as level design, but that's how we implemented what the characters are feeling within those small sections of the dungeons. Usually we came up with the settings and then implemented it and then we'd have sort of a working build, show it to Mr. Sakaguchi, and then get his feedback, and then revise it and make it better from there. That was the main workflow.

Speaking of revisions the game went through, Mr. Sakaguchi has been very forthcoming about the number of times that the story, world, and mechanics of The Last Story had to be scrapped and reinvented. Is this typical of game development, or was TLS a particularly challenging project?
Originally it was more sci-fi, a more shooter-type of RPG. It was more about fighting from a distance. Compared to other titles, I think there was a lot more. Especially because, for example, Blue Dragon, which I worked on with Mr. Sakaguchi, was something that we tried to create as the ultimate, complete version of the turn-based RPG. We both had an arsenal of what we'd done in the past. But this one is sort of a new concept, so we were trying to seek out what

GAMEOGRAPHY



SONIC ADVENTURE
1999, DREAMCAST
TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

RoomMania #203
ルーマニア#203 ネジタイヘイ
© SEGA ENTERPRISES, LTD. 2000

ROOMMANIA #203
2000, DREAMCAST (JAPAN)
GAME DESIGNER

PLANET RING
Press Start Button

PLANET RING
2000, DREAMCAST (EUROPE)
LEAD PROGRAMMER

BLINX: THE TIME SWEEPER
2002, XBOX
GAME DESIGNER, LEAD PROGRAMMER

the best way was, so with that in mind, we did reference a lot of different games, but it was like a brand-new game that we had to create, so that was challenging.

What lessons have you learned from Blue Dragon and The Last Story in terms of the differences between Japanese and Western audiences?

What I like about Japanese players is how attentive they are to quality, perhaps due to Japan's long-standing tradition of fastidious craftsmanship. What I like about Western players is how generous they are in appraising games that challenge conventions or attempt new things. I have great respect for their willingness to embrace innovation.

With Blue Dragon, you made a game that used very familiar mechanics, while in The Last Story you painstakingly reinvented a genre from the ground up. How much more effort is it to make a game like The Last Story, and in terms of audience reception, do you feel that it's worth the trouble?

Even by RPG standards, it took a great deal of time to develop The Last Story. Early in development, I would say that it felt more like an action-adventure game than an RPG. It was faster, more aggressively paced. But it took time to tell the players all the things we wanted to say, so we struggled to find the right balance.

It's been about a year and a half since The Last Story came out in Japan. How have your thoughts about the game evolved in that time?

That's true. A year and a half does feel like a long time, and now the Wii U is about to come out.... But the experience of developing the North American version gave me an opportunity to play through The Last Story several more times, and in a weird way it almost felt like I was making a sequel. Maybe it's just because our target audience is now North American players, but it feels like the speedy pacing of this game is exactly right for 2012.

How did your experience living in England affect your approach to game development?

I'm a fan of both fantasy and architecture, so when I lived in England I spent every weekend touring the castles and cathedrals and caves of both Great Britain and continental Europe. I feel that experience greatly affected my work in designing levels for The Last Story, in all sorts of little ways—the width of passages, the height of ceilings, and so on. But unfortunately, due to memory limitations, I couldn't quite make Lazulis Island into the scale of a real European city, as I had originally hoped.

How has the gaming industry changed since you started?

I've been at this for 20 years now. Back when I started, I assumed that the game industry would be in a mature and settled state by now. I sure was wrong about that, huh? Of course, there are still new video game systems coming out, and thanks to all our fans out there, the industry is still as busy as ever. I'm grateful for that. But in terms of the development process, things have changed a great deal. Games today don't feel like the hand-crafted labors of love that they used to. I really want to bring that feeling back to the games I make.

> *"Games today don't feel like the hand-crafted labors of love that they used to."*

You've expressed interest in developing for Wii U. How do you think its features could benefit RPGs or action-RPGs?

In an era in which even Dragon Quest has become an MMO game, I'm excited about the potential of Miiverse to bring social elements to an even wider audience.

What aspect of creating a video game do you enjoy the most?

Whether I'm designing or programming, the part I always like best is adding the audio to my games. Being able to move around in the game with the background music playing and triggering all the sound effects and visual effects as you interact with the world. It's the most satisfying payoff for all of our hard work.

When you're stumped by a particularly difficult problem while creating a game, what's your process for working through it?

First, I'll save the current situation. Then I thoroughly deconstruct the entirety of the element that contains the problem. I don't talk to anyone while I'm doing this. Then, after about three days I load up the data and, having taken a step away from it, reassess the situation. Next, I discuss the problem with the other team members, which is probably what I should have done in the first place. Being unable to proceed until I've thoroughly worked over the problem myself first is quite a hassle.

What other games or game creators do you most admire or respect, and why?

The games I respect are the early entries in the Diablo and Wizardry series. The creators I admire are all the people I mentioned in this interview.

Whose works in other forms of media, such as film or literature, do you most admire or enjoy?

I love the works of Aaron Sorkin. Every time I read one of his scripts, it makes me wish my English were better.

What is your favorite hobby or pastime?

Hmm...driving or cooking. I'll go with driving. I love cornering at 80 km/h in hilly areas. I love the feel of shifting weight and the grip of the tires as I gently turn the wheel or depress the accelerator. I don't care what kind of car it is. It's fun just to experience the differences between various models of cars and types of road.

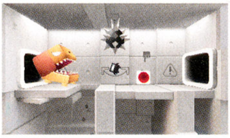
If you could have one superpower, what would it be?

We used to talk about this when we were designing the time-manipulation abilities in Blinx: The Time Sweeper. But, naturally, I'd want to fly like NiGHTS!

GAMEOGRAPHY

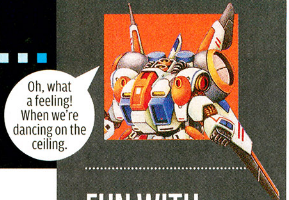
BLINX 2: MASTERS OF TIME & SPACE
2004, XBOX
CODIRECTOR, LEAD PROGRAMMER

BLUE DRAGON
2007, XBOX 360
DIRECTOR



CUBIC NINJA
2011, NINTENDO 3DS
PRODUCER

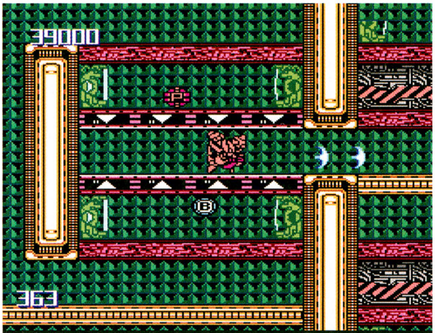
THE LAST STORY
2012, Wii
DEVELOPMENT LEAD


Oh, what a feeling! When we're dancing on the ceiling.

METAL STORM
irem
IREM AMERICA CORP.
LICENSED BY NINTENDO FOR PLAY ON THE
Nintendo ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
Official Nintendo Seal of Quality
REV-A

Metal Storm

What goes up must come down.



It's easy to get disoriented when you're constantly flipping up and down. Doubly so when you're running through a maze.

PLATFORM: **NES**
PUBLISHER: **IREM**
DEVELOPER: **IREM**
RELEASE DATE: **FEBRUARY 1991**
COVERED IN ISSUES: **20, 22, 23, 45**
NUMBER OF R-TYPE BOSS CAMEOS: **1**

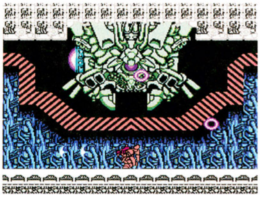
Last year, we were very impressed with the gravity-flipping gameplay of VVVVVV when it was released in the Nintendo eShop. However, it wasn't the first time that a game made use of the ability to run on the ceiling. Irem was there more than 20 years prior with its obscure NES title Metal Storm.

The plot is overblown and mostly inconsequential. A massive space-based superlaser—which was originally created to defend Earth—has malfunctioned and is blowing up planets willy-nilly. Our only hope for survival is to send a lone mech into the weapon and activate its self-destruct mechanism.

Your mech, the M-308 Gunner, has the ability to defy gravity at will, and each level is structured in such a way that you constantly have to jump back and forth between the floor and the ceiling in order to progress. To keep the technique from growing stale, it's used in multiple ways throughout the game. There are special platforms that you can jump through only from above or only from below, gates that open and close when you flip, and an entire stage where you're trapped within a box that freely floats around, forcing you to dodge obstacles as it moves.

In addition to having plenty of creative platforming, the game is very challenging. Some enemies are affected by the gravity swap, and since the M-308 can take just one hit, a careless bump into an enemy in midair during a flip spells instant doom. During one clever boss battle, the only safe surface is on the boss itself, and you must jump between his separate components while attacking. Although death comes often in Metal Storm, it's accompanied by one of the coolest explosion effects on the NES, so it's hard to be too bothered by the setback.

The elaborate backgrounds might seem a bit garish in screenshots, but the game looks terrific in motion. The sprites are well-animated, and slick programming tricks are used to provide some impressive-looking parallax scrolling. Metal Storm is a true hidden gem in the NES library. It holds up remarkably nicely, too, making it well worth checking out. —**PHIL T.**

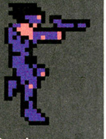


FUN WITH PHYSICS

Metal Storm wasn't the only NES game that let players experiment with the effects of gravity. These other titles demonstrate that Sir Isaac Newton's theory isn't just a good idea—it's the law.

MEGA MAN 5
Before facing Gravity Man, Mega Man must make it through the Robot Master's lair, which is littered with areas where gravity is reversed. The boss, not surprisingly, can alter gravity at will.

THE ADVENTURES OF RAD GRAVITY
Space-faring adventurer Rad Gravity spends a level saving the upside-down planet of Turvia from destruction by recovering its stolen Gravitational Device.



LOW G MAN: THE LOW GRAVITY MAN
Although Low G Man can't directly manipulate gravity, the hero's unique properties allow him to jump extremely high. When fully powered, he can leap nearly two full screens.

HAVE A FAVORITE CLASSIC GAME YOU'D LIKE TO SEE REVISITED?
Send us your requests—we'll consider them for a future installment of Playback. nintendopower@futureus.com

You might know **Joshua**.
He loves video games, and he owns enough to know they're not all meant for kids. That's why he reminds his friends (at least the ones that have kids) that they all have **big black letters on the box** to help parents find the ones that are best for their families.

You can learn about those ratings at **ESRB.org**

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ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE
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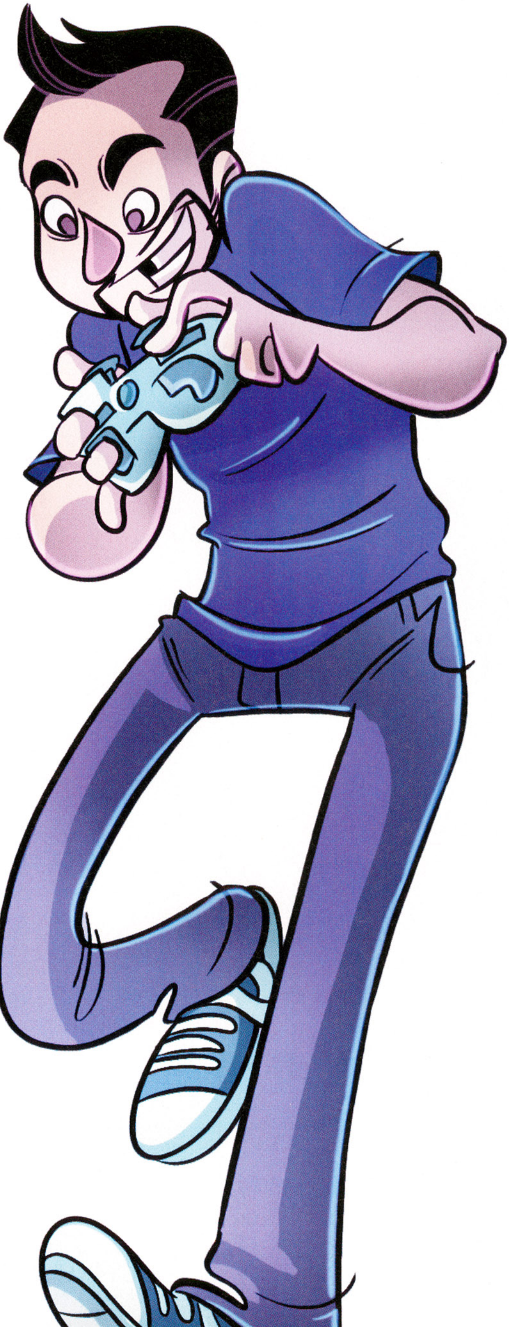
EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
EVERYONE 10+ E 10+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
MATURE 17+ M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
ADULTS ONLY 18+ AO CONTENT RATED BY ESRB



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REVIEWS

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Wii

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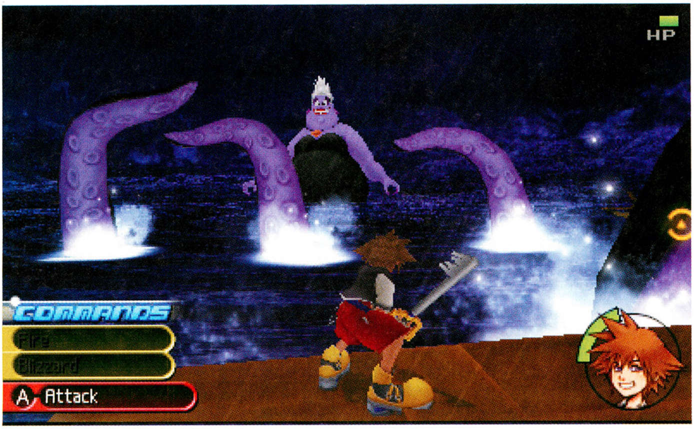
NINTENDO DS

THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN pg.82

Sora, Riku, and the gang make their Nintendo 3DS debut in Kingdom Hearts 3D: Dream Drop Distance.



Going the Distance

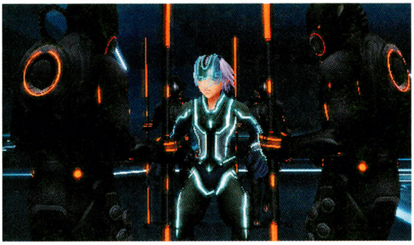
KINGDOM HEARTS 3D: DREAM DROP DISTANCE

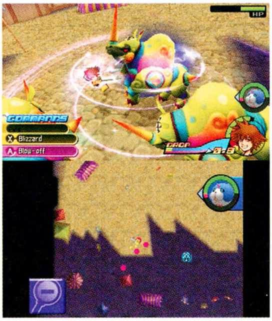
8.0

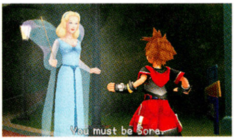
Rarely has a game left me with such strongly mixed feelings as has Kingdom Hearts 3D. On one hand, this is a more ambitious and significant title than the two installments released on Nintendo DS, and from a pure gameplay standpoint, it's probably the best entry in the series to date. On the other hand, the storytelling is pretty much a complete mess—and that's coming from someone who's previously found guilty pleasure in the franchise's unique brand of convoluted melodrama. The sum of these uneven parts is certainly a game worth playing, especially for Kingdom Hearts fans, but the frustrating narrative makes for an experience that leaves you less than fully satisfied.

Dream Drop Distance is set after the events of Kingdom Hearts 2 and reunites us with protagonists Sora and Riku. Despite having already saved multiple worlds and defeated a parade of supervillains, the two are told they won't be considered true Keyblade Masters until they pass an exam called the Mark of Mastery. (Talk about strict job requirements.) To do so, they must travel to six sleeping worlds and find the keyholes that awaken the realms from their slumber. Most of the worlds are inspired by Disney films, as is series tradition. Unlike the DS titles, however, Dream Drop Distance largely avoids retreading old territory. Instead it introduces brand-new locales based on *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Tron: Legacy*, *Pinocchio*, *The Three Musketeers* (the 2004 animated version starring Mickey, Donald, and Goofy), and *Fantasia*. Players will return to series-mainstay Traverse Town for what seems like the eight millionth time, but it's reinvigorated by the presence of characters from cult classic The World Ends with You. (If you're not familiar with that particular DS masterpiece, do yourself a favor and seek it out immediately.)

The fresh itinerary is complemented by a host of new gameplay concepts. In a rush to introduce them all, the game's early moments tend to get bogged down with tutorials, but the lessons quickly prove worthwhile. That's especially true of combat, which feels faster and more dynamic than in previous installments while also boasting greater depth. The most significant addition is probably the Flowmotion system, which allows Sora and Riku to grind rails, swing from lampposts, and kick off walls—all while seamlessly launching







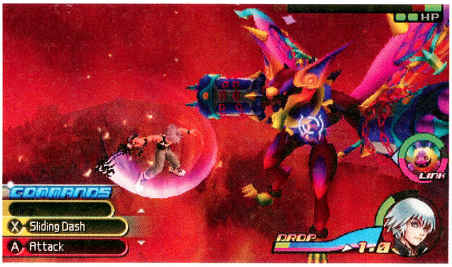
[Above] If only it were so easy for Haley Joel Osment's character in A.I..

attacks on nearby foes. A practiced player can pull off an impressive string of acrobatics, and the resulting fluidity is a wonder to behold. It only makes sense that our heroes would grow more badass in the wake of their previous exploits, and Flowmotion is a great way to reflect that in practical gameplay terms.

Of course, even the most formidable warrior can use a bit of help from time to time. That's where Dream Eaters come in. You create these AI-controlled allies by acquiring "recipes" and mixing the necessary ingredients. Dream Eaters come in dozens of different species, each with its own distinct battle capabilities (including special Link Attacks that allow them to team up with Sora or Riku to wreak visually spectacular devastation). To get the most out of your companions, though, you'll have to spend time nurturing them. Feeding, petting, and playing with a Dream Eater not only improves its own combat performance, but also unlocks new abilities and upgrades for Sora and Riku. You'll choose those benefits from a grid unique to each Dream Eater, enabling quite a bit of customization when it comes to assembling your party and developing your characters. Raising these new allies can grow tedious after a while, and fighting alongside them lacks the peculiar appeal of joining

R Photo Mode
Y Ability Link
X Menu

There it is! That's the gadget we need to retrieve!



World Tour

You'll travel to seven worlds over the course of Dream Drop Distance. Here are our thoughts on each, rated on a scale of one to four Keyblades.

Yeah, sounds great. Whatever.

TRAVERSE TOWN

BASED ON: N/A

The cast of The World Ends with You shows up in Traverse Town, making this visit to the perennial Kingdom Hearts starting point a little more interesting. You'll return here later in the game to help Neku and company wrap up some unfinished business.

★★☆☆

LA CITÉ DES CLOCHES

BASED ON: *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*

Given the movie on which it's based, it's not too surprising that La Cité des Cloches proves less than inspiring. There's just nothing about this world that really stands out...besides the fact that Jason Alexander reprises his role as Hugo the Gargoyle!

★☆☆☆

THE GRID

BASED ON: *Tron: Legacy*

All of the major characters from the film make an appearance, and they bear a remarkable resemblance to the real-life actors. Like all things *Tron*, the world looks really cool, and there's a fun light cycle minigame during Riku's quest.

★★★☆

Why, he swallows whole ships, alive!

PRANKSTER'S PARADISE

BASED ON: *Pinocchio*

This world is sort of a mixed bag. Sora's section involves grinding on a massive roller coaster and culminates with a pretty awesome moment involving Monstro. Riku, on the other hand, spends most of his time *inside* the giant whale, which isn't terribly interesting.

★★☆☆

All for one, and one for all!

COUNTRY OF THE MUSKETEERS

BASED ON: *The Three Musketeers*

It may be based on a direct-to-DVD movie, but Country of the Musketeers features Mickey, Donald, and Goofy, so it's a winner in our book. Peg-Leg Pete also figures prominently, and the world offers a nice variety of locales.

★★★☆

SYMPHONY OF SORCERY

BASED ON: *Fantasia*

This world captures the spirit of *Fantasia* perfectly. It makes superb use of the stirring classical soundtrack from the film, the environments are wonderfully surreal, and a little musical note plays every time you attack an enemy. Plus, Riku's epic clash with Chernabog is friggin' awesome.

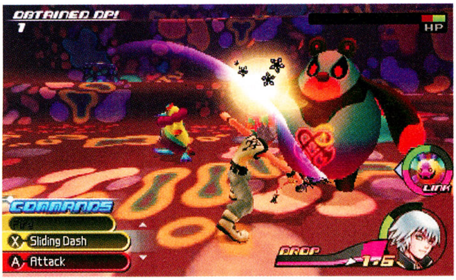
★★★★

???

BASED ON: N/A

We won't reveal the game's final destination, but it's quite the spectacle and plays host to some pretty awe-inspiring moments. Before all is said and done, you'll face no fewer than five bosses here, most of whom pose a pretty stiff challenge

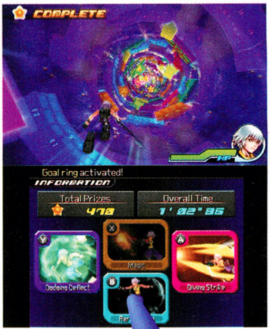
★★★☆


OBTAINED DP!
1
HP
LINK
COMMANDS
X Sliding Dash
A Attack
DROP

Lemme at 'em!

Tron... He's alive.

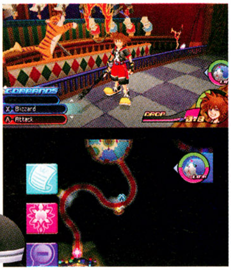
[Below] After playing Kingdom Hearts 3D, we're officially ready for a sequel to The World Ends with You. (Not that we weren't already.)

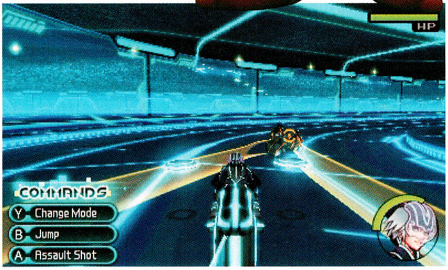

COMPLETE
HP
Goal ring activated!
INFORMATION
Total Prizes
470
Overall Time
1' 02" 86
Dodging Deflect
Magic
Diving Strike

forces with Donald and Goofy in previous games, but they add much-appreciated strategic considerations to the Kingdom Hearts formula.

Another interesting wrinkle: Sora and Riku are mysteriously separated as soon as they set out for the Mark of Mastery exam, and though each hero visits the same locales, their quests unfold very differently. Throughout the game, you'll switch back and forth between the two. You can either make the transition voluntarily whenever you want or wait until your Drop Gauge runs out. The meter depletes automatically with the passage of time, though all sorts of different factors can speed up or slow down the process. Occasional bouts of frustration do arise from the Drop Gauge hitting empty at inopportune times. If it happens while you're fighting a boss, for instance, you'll have to restart the battle when you switch back to the character you were using when the gauge ran dry. Still, the overall concept is a novel way to present two stories in parallel and keep the player simultaneously invested in both.

Unfortunately, this particular investment doesn't pay off terribly well. The Kingdom Hearts plot has always been pretty labyrinthine, but Dream Drop Distance crosses the line into incomprehensible territory. Why certain worlds are asleep—and what that even means—is never clearly explained. All sorts of previously established rules are broken willy-nilly, seemingly so characters can show up for no reason other than to tug at your nostalgia strings. Worse, the game attempts to make it seem like the events of the entire series have all been part of a single nefarious master plan, and torturously twists the motivations behind them in the process. The developers were clearly aiming for a big M. Night Shyamalan-style twist, as if to say, "Ha ha! This is what was *really* going on the whole time." But they obviously weren't planning this from the beginning, and it fails to make any sense if you think about it for more than five seconds. Instead, the whole thing just comes across as


COMMANDS
X Blizzard
A Attack
DROP


HP
COMMANDS
Y Change Mode
B Jump
A Assault Shot

one big retcon.

Kingdom Hearts is at its best when it's focusing on characters rather than plot (see 358/2 Days), and Dream Drop Distance would have been better served spending more time on Riku's ongoing quest for redemption and his friendship with Sora—subjects that provide the story's best moments. Incidentally, this ends up feeling like Riku's game, and I wouldn't be at all surprised to see Sora cede the spotlight to him even more in the future.

Hopefully future Kingdom Hearts releases offer more of the great variety showcased by Dream Drop Distance, as well. For as much as the story falls flat, the game manages to keep you engaged with not only great combat, but exceptional set pieces and fantastic boss encounters. Over the course of the adventure, you'll hop on a Tron light cycle, protect Princess Minnie's stagecoach from a rampaging T. rex, and enter each world via free-falling segments that really showcase the system's stereoscopic 3D. Bosses include both original creations and classic Disney foils, and almost every battle against them is unique, clever, and a heck of a lot of fun.

One thing you can always count on from Kingdom Hearts is top-notch production values, and Dream Drop Distance is no exception. The game looks spectacular, with a clean, sharp visual style and really impressive character models. The cast of The World Ends with You looks great in polygons, and just wait until you see how convincingly Jeff Bridges has been rendered (both young and old versions) for the *Tron: Legacy* stage. Wonderfully expressive animation brings everything to life, highlighted by a few great moments of physical comedy involving Donald and Goofy. Additionally, all of the dialogue is fully voiced, with the major players from previous games (including Haley Joel Osment and Leonard Nimoy) returning to reprise their roles. Most of the performances are rock-solid, and I appreciate how Square Enix goes the extra mile to ensure that the lip-synching matches up perfectly with the English voices.

Everything else sort of pales in comparison to the music, though. Yoko Shimomura and her fellow composers have once again delivered a virtuosic effort. The soundtrack features a host of great new selections alongside stellar remixes of not only old Kingdom Hearts favorites, but three memorable tunes from The World Ends with You. The latter are so good it's almost a crime you get to hear them only in Traverse Town (and that the characters won't shut up while they're playing).

The problematic narrative prevented me from enjoying Dream Drop Distance as much as I have previous games in the series, but this title still does a lot of things right. In fact, I've never had more fun *playing* a Kingdom Hearts release before, so if you're someone who couldn't care less about storytelling in video games, you'll likely count this as the high point of the franchise. It's also an impressively meaty adventure, weighing in at about 30 hours, and the presentation is second to none for a Nintendo 3DS title. In the end it's not the most coherent dream, but it's a pleasant one nonetheless. **—STEVE T.**

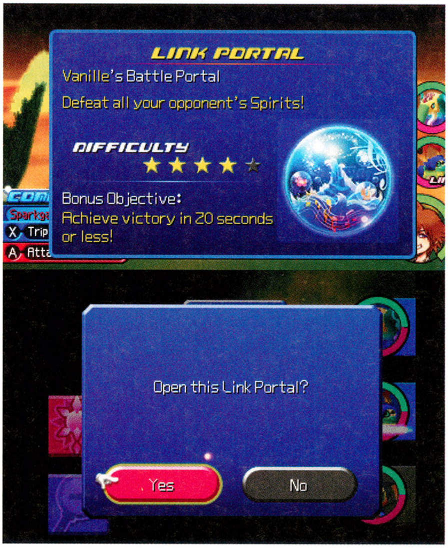
N3DS **PUBLISHER: SQUARE ENIX**
DEVELOPER: SQUARE ENIX
ESRB: EVERYONE 10+

Yes, I'm going to save her.

COMMANDS
Sliding Dash
Attack
HP

Heart-to-Heart

As you play through Dream Drop Distance, you can plop down Link Portals anywhere in the environment. These will then appear at the same location for anyone with whom you StreetPass. There are two different types of portals that you can create: Battle Portals challenge other players to fight three of your Dream Eaters, while Friendship Portals allow those players to team up with a trio of your companions for a limited time.



LINK PORTAL

Vanille's Battle Portal

Defeat all your opponent's Spirits!

DIFFICULTY

★★★★☆

Bonus Objective:

Achieve victory in 20 seconds or less!

Open this Link Portal?

WRITERS' BLOCK

WHAT NAMCO BANDAI CHARACTER WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE INCLUDED IN THE NEXT SUPER SMASH BROS.?

JUSTIN CHENG

Heihachi Mishima from Tekken is in almost every fighting game these days, so it would be fitting for him to be included in Smash Bros., too.

CHRIS HOFFMAN

Klonoa, obviously. But I'm also a big RPG fan, so maybe someone from Xenosaga or any of the Tales games. KOS-MOS, perhaps?

CODY MARTIN

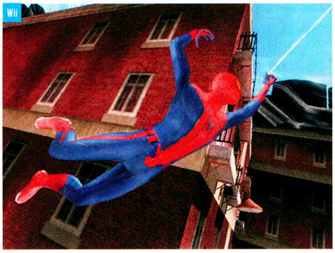
I hope the Dig Dug guy is included. His best match-up would be against Kirby or Jigglypuff, in which he'd use his inflation abilities to pop them like balloons.

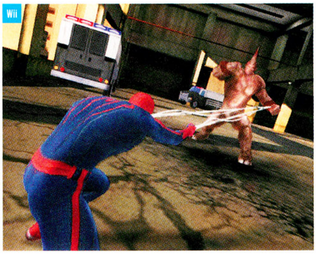
PHIL THEOBALD

Psst, Cody...the "Dig Dug guy" is named Taizo Hori. Personally, I'd like to see his son Susumu (aka Mr. Driller) make a Smash Bros. appearance. A match-up between him and Jill from Drill Dozer would be a dream come true for me.

STEVE THOMASON

I can't believe no one has said Pac-Man yet. Not only is he every bit as iconic as Mario, but his classic game board could make for a really cool stage. My number-two choice: Voldo.





Far from Amazing

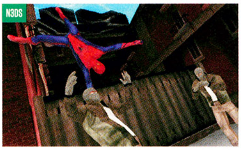
THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN

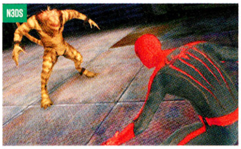
5.0

Set after the events of the film by the same name, The Amazing Spider-Man brings Peter Parker back to Oscorp after Gwen Stacy catches wind of some suspicious experiments. You might want to wait to pick up this title if you're looking to avoid spoilers, but you don't have to see the movie to understand the game's basic idea—you're the friendly neighborhood Spider-Man, out to stop a mad genius bent on destroying New York City.

Judging from the way you can seamlessly maneuver Spidey, he's more than capable of accomplishing this task. One of the game's coolest features is Spider-Man's Web Rush, which is a bullet-time-esque mode that allows you to change direction midswing and quickly zip from ledges to walls to enemies' faces. The controls are fairly tight whether you're playing on the Nintendo 3DS system, or with the Wii Remote and Nunchuk (which incorporates light motion control) or the Classic Controller on the Wii console. Although brawls aren't very challenging—you can easily button-mash your way through most fights—there is a multitude of ways to engage your foes, such as by encasing an enemy in your web and sticking him to the ceiling. Spider-Man's various smackdowns look cool and make you feel pretty tough for a while.

However, any fun derived from Spider-Man's web-slinging and butt-kicking is overshadowed by the game's weak overall presentation on both Wii and Nintendo 3DS. In both versions, the gameplay is plagued with shoddy animation and is littered with glitches that include enemies freezing in midair and character models flickering. Furthermore, your only rewards from the game's tedious boss fights are choppy cut-scenes that almost always end abruptly (right before a giant robot explodes, for example) and feel totally anticlimactic. And while the game's fully voice-acted storyline isn't terrible, it drags on for way too long: plot points, mission objectives, and combat techniques that seem somewhat interesting in the beginning of the game soon wear thin from their repetitiveness. —**CODY M.**



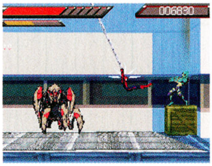


N3DS Wii PUBLISHER: **ACTIVISION**
DEVELOPER: **BEENOX**
ESRB: **TEEN**

THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN

5.0

Unlike the Wii and N3DS arachnid adventures released at the same time, this version of The Amazing Spider-Man is an old-school side-scroller that mixes 2D character sprites with polygonal backgrounds. This graphical style doesn't deliver the visual detail you'd expect from a comic book-inspired title. That shortcoming is notable in Spidey and his foes, but it's the very plain-looking levels that really drag down the presentation. Furthermore, both the gameplay and story need punch. Although it has the basics of wall-crawling and web-shooting, there's little else that makes the game stand out. The combined lack of compelling gameplay, graphics, and story makes it hard to recommend The Amazing Spider-Man, even to die-hard spider-fans. —**RANDY N.**



DS PUBLISHER: **ACTIVISION**
DEVELOPER: **OTHER OCEAN**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

For **Juri**, the big letter on the box is a good start. But sometimes she wants to know more about the games **Sean** and **Maia** want to play. And now she can, **right from her phone**, right from the store.

You can do the same thing with **ESRB's free mobile app**.

Learn more at **ESRB.org/mobile**.

Juri P
Lakeside, CA

ESRB
ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE RATING BOARD

EARLY CHILDHOOD eC CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
EVERYONE 10+ E 10+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
MATURE 17+ M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
ADULTS ONLY 18+ AO CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

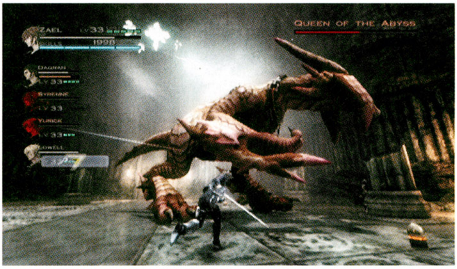
The Last Word

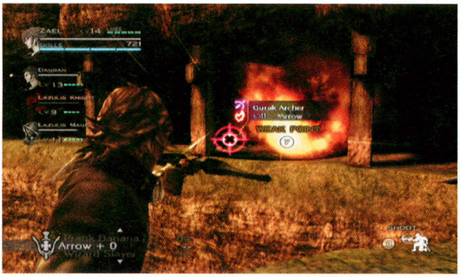
THE LAST STORY

9.0 It's staggering to think that, a few months ago, it looked like The Last Story wasn't going to make it to North America. Staggering not only because it's the latest epic directed by Final Fantasy creator Hironobu Sakaguchi and because it represents a new type of Japanese RPG designed to appeal to Western players, but because a huge chunk of the worldwide audience would have been deprived of one of the best role-playing titles in recent memory.

True to its creators' intentions, The Last Story is an RPG unlike any other. In fact, early on, it hardly feels like an RPG at all. Battles are fast-paced and action-packed, with a fantastic sense of collision between you, the enemies, and the environment; impressive acrobatics let you leap over battlefield obstacles, and the way foes stagger back after a hit from your sword (and you recoil from theirs) provides an incredibly satisfying sense of impact. The action feels more like The Legend of Zelda or—dare I say it?—Devil May Cry than it does any RPG, especially if you switch your attack style from automatic to manual.

Though rushing into enemy hordes head-on often works, there are numerous options to keep things fun, strategic, and exciting. You can draw enemy attention using protagonist Zael's Gathering ability so your allies can unleash spells; hide behind obstacles and rush out for a surprise attack when bad guys come near; snipe enemies from a distance (albeit for low damage); destroy parts of the environment to crush your adversaries; or sneak around to reposition yourself for a well-timed ambush. Unlike a typical RPG there's no MP to speak of (just a quickly regenerating skill bar to prevent you from spamming special attacks), no items to use, and each character in your party has a stock of lives that allows them to be revived a set number of times before they're out of the fight. Even the brilliantly designed dungeons seem like action-game set pieces. But don't worry, battlefield tacticians; eventually you do gain the ability to issue commands to your allies, giving the gameplay much more of an RPG feel.





[Left] Jirall is a pompous jerkstore, but at least he's an entertaining, pompous jerkstore.

ZAEL
CALISTA
DAGRAN

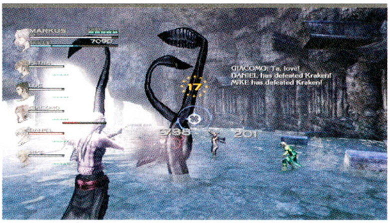
Despite its radically different approach to combat, The Last Story is supported by traditional RPG staples: an engrossing story and compelling characters. The setting—a European-style fantasy world where the land is slowly dying—provides a believable yet mesmerizing backdrop for a tale of love, war, conviction, and political intrigue. The romance between Zael and female lead Calista is a solid foundation upon which the rest of the tale is built; their interest in one another feels wholly convincing, and, unlike in most games, the nature of their relationship is actually addressed rather than left to the imagination. The plot isn't all gold—it gets lost a bit during the middle of the game—but the heartwarming love story holds everything together.

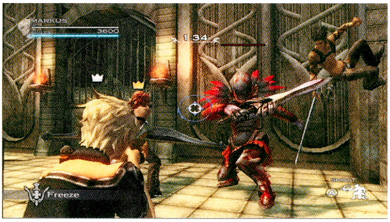
Zael and Calista hardly steal the show, however. They're backed up by a fantastically entertaining group of companions, including unapologetic lush Syrenne, womanizing mage Lowell, withdrawn loner Yurick, and demure intellectual Mirania. The characters really come to life during the course of the adventure, thanks not only to quests that flesh out their histories, but also to the constant verbal interactions that ensure there's never a dull moment. The often-humorous banter isn't limited to cut-scenes; you're continuously immersed in characterization and plot development while you're traversing dungeons, and even in battle. It truly provides a sensation that you're not traveling alone, and more than once I found myself

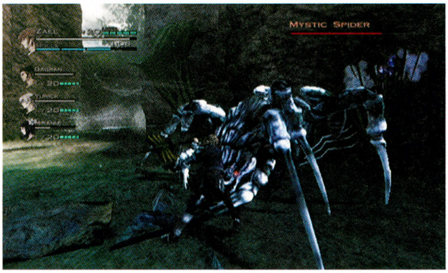
ZAEL
DAGRAN
YURICK
MIRANIA
SLASH
SEEK

Group Storytelling

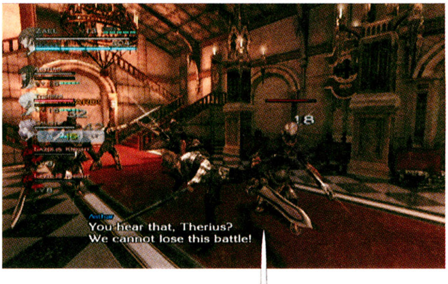
As a single-player RPG, The Last Story delivers in virtually every regard. But evidently the developers didn't think that was enough—they've included an online multiplayer component as well. There are two modes to choose from, each for up to six players: versus (in which players duke it out, deathmatch-style, in one of several battle arenas) and co-op (in which you team up to confront superchallenging bosses). Both modes allow you to choose from numerous characters, including enemies and NPCs from the single-player mode. During our online play test the action was quick, smooth, and completely lag-free; it was also a lot of fun—versus mode because of the wide variety of battle tactics that you can employ, and co-op mode for the fulfilling sense of camaraderie you get from working together as a team. The online functionality is somewhat hurt by the lack of in-game chat (you communicate only through a variety of dialogue snippets), but that doesn't prevent the gameplay from being a blast. All told, The Last Story's multiplayer mode is a surprisingly worthwhile inclusion.





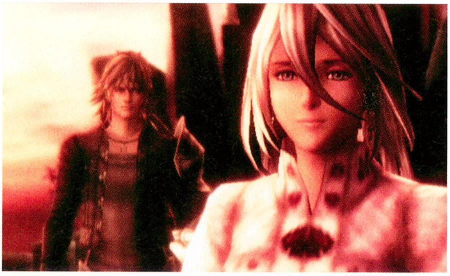


[Above] The boss battles in The Last Story are creative and frequently challenging. This giant spider, for example, will consume your party members!



slowing down during exploration just to make sure I didn't miss any of the dialogue. (It doesn't hurt that all of the major characters boast superb voice acting.) Even beyond your party members, the cast is fascinating. Count Arganan—ruler of the island on which the game takes place—walks a fine line between good and evil throughout much of the game, and foppish dandy Jirall (the count's would-be nephew-in-law) becomes wildly amusing as he finds himself losing control of the situation around him.

Though the argument could be made that The Last Story is linear—and the dungeons most certainly are—there's enough to see and do to prevent the game from growing stagnant. The bustling hub of Lazulis City is packed with ways to pass the time. There are entire optional chapters to complete, as well as numerous minor side quests that range from tracking down tokens to growing pumpkins to fighting grudge-holding enemies. Additionally, you can converse with passersby, compete in arena battles, scour the streets and alleys for elusive goods, and more. With a little ingenuity you'll



Dare to Compare

The Last Story isn't the only innovative, critically acclaimed, enthusiast-demanded Japanese RPG to finally arrive on North American Wii systems this year. Xenoblade Chronicles, released in April, found itself in very much the same situation. Despite the superficial similarities, though, the games are quite different; whereas The Last Story is about quick action and intimate storytelling, Xenoblade Chronicles favors exploration and a grandiose sense of scale. Both games are well worth picking up for RPG fans (although if you're pressed for time and can play only one, you might want to opt for The Last Story, since you can finish it in a fraction of the time required to conquer Xenoblade's daunting 100-hour quest).

LV006
Mechon M63
HP 1229/1229
LV-10
HP 1847/1847
LV-10
Select Arts
Change Target
Move Camera
CAUTION
Light Heal
Restores HP to one party member.

gain access to secret areas of the city and have the chance to go on a date or two. You can also spend a lot of time customizing the appearance of your characters. By mixing, matching, and upgrading your equipment you can tailor your heroes' appearances to your liking, right down to the colors of individual armor components. You can even turn the outfits invisible so your heroes are running around in nothing but their underwear! (Yes, the game has a quirky sense of humor to counterbalance its predominantly serious nature.)

Furthermore, The Last Story looks and sounds absolutely phenomenal for a game on the Wii console. Composer Nobuo Uematsu (of Final Fantasy fame) works his magic once again, delivering a stunning soundtrack that can be as emotional, energetic, or dramatic as required. Meanwhile, every cave, catacomb, forest, and street looks authentic due to superb environmental architecture, and each location—especially Lazulis City—is bursting with touches that bring the world to life. Buildings actually look worn and lived in; citizens work, wander, and play in the streets; butterflies flit above patches of flowers. Beautiful animation adds extra realism, such as the way Zael subtly raises his arm when navigating a tight space, adjusts his body when pushing past an NPC, and struggles to maintain his balance near a precarious edge. All the details come at a price, however—a number of textures are low-resolution, and the frame rate occasionally drops severely, especially during some of the intense battles near the end of the game.

Overall, however, The Last Story is an awesome experience. If the game is an experiment in creating a new type of RPG, it's one that has succeeded in almost every way, from the battle system to the character interactions to the ingenious boss fights to the nearly perfect pacing that spans the 30-plus-hour quest. The developers, it could be said, have indeed saved the best for Last. —**CHRIS H.**

Wii PUBLISHER: **XSEED GAMES**
DEVELOPER: **MISTWALKER/AQ INTERACTIVE**
ESRB: **TEEN**

REVIEWS ARCHIVE

THE COMPLETE LIST OF NINTENDO POWER REVIEWS FROM THE PAST YEAR

SCORES REFLECT INDIVIDUAL REVIEWERS' OPINIONS

Nintendo 3DS

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Ace Combat: Assault Horizon Legacy	7.5	Namco Bandai	273	T
Bit.Trip Saga	8.0	Aksys	271	E
Captain America: Super Soldier	5.0	Sega	273	T
Cave Story 3D	8.0	NIS America	273	E10+
Centipede: Infestation	6.5	Atari	273	E10+
Cooking Mama 4: Kitchen Magic	5.0	Majesco	273	E
Crush 3D	7.0	Sega	275	E10+
Deca Sports Extreme	5.0	Konami	271	E
James Noir's Hollywood Crimes	5.0	Ubisoft	273	T
Kid Icarus: Uprising	9.5	Nintendo	277	E10+
LEGO Batman 2: DC Super Heroes	7.0	Warner Bros.	280	E10+
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7	7.0	Warner Bros.	274	E10+
Mario & Sonic at the London 2012 Olympic Games	7.0	Sega	275	E
Mario Kart 7	9.0	Nintendo	274	E
Mario Tennis Open	7.0	Nintendo	278	E
Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D	9.0	Konami	276	M
Doctor Lautrec and the Forgotten Knights	6.5	Konami	272	E10+
Driver Renegade	3.0	Ubisoft	271	M
Dual Pen Sports	7.0	Namco Bandai	270	E10+
Face Racers: Photo Finish	4.0	Majesco	271	E
FIFA Soccer 12	7.0	EA Sports	272	E
Frogger 3D	6.5	Konami	271	E
Funky Barn 3D	6.0	Ubisoft	276	E
Gabrielle's Ghostly Groove 3D	5.5	Natsume	271	E
Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters	4.0	Warner Bros.	270	E10+
Harvest Moon: The Tale of Two Towns 3D	7.5	Natsume	272	E
Heroes of Ruin	7.0	Square Enix	280	T
Michael Jackson: The Experience	5.0	Ubisoft	273	E10+
Nano Assault	7.0	Majesco	273	E10+
Nikoli's Pencil Puzzle	6.0	Konami	272	E
Order Up!!	6.5	UTV Ignition	275	E
Pac-Man Party 3D	4.5	Namco Bandai	273	E
Pet Zombies	5.5	Majesco	272	T
Pokémon Rumble Blast	7.5	Nintendo	273	E
Rayman Origins	8.5	Ubisoft	279	E10+
Resident Evil: Revelations	9.0	Capcom	275	M
Rhythm Thief & the Emperor's Treasure	8.0	Sega	280	E10+
RollerCoaster Tycoon 3D	5.5	Atari	278	E
Shifting World	6.5	Aksys	277	E
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor Overclocked	9.0	Atlus	271	T
Shinobi	7.5	Sega	273	T
The Sims 3 Pets	7.5	Electronic Arts	273	T
Sonic Generations	8.0	Sega	274	E
Spider-Man: Edge of Time	6.0	Activision	273	T
Spirit Camera: The Cursed Memoir	7.0	Nintendo	277	T
Star Fox 64 3D	8.0	Nintendo	271	E
Super Mario 3D Land	9.0	Nintendo	273	E
Tales of the Abyss	7.0	Namco Bandai	275	T
Tekken 3D Prime Edition	7.5	Namco Bandai	276	T
Tetris Axis	7.5	Nintendo	272	E
Theatrhythm Final Fantasy	8.0	Square Enix	280	E10+
Thor: God of Thunder	6.0	Sega	272	T
Transformers: Dark of the Moon–Stealth Force Edition	4.0	Activision	270	E10+
WWE All Stars	7.5	THQ	274	T

MORE ON:

LEGO BATMAN 2: DC SUPER HEROES

I wasn't the biggest fan of the original LEGO Batman, but I had a lot of fun with the sequel. The voice acting makes the cut-scenes more compelling (although I can see how longtime LEGO-game devotees might be turned off by this addition), and being able to play as non-Batman-related characters provides the variety that the first title desperately needed. —JUSTIN C.

MORE ON:

METAL GEAR SOLID: SNAKE EATER 3D

Now that I've had a chance to play Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D with the Circle Pad Pro, I wonder how I was ever able to survive without it. Having the camera mapped to the right Circle Pad and important functions (such as crouching and performing actions) mapped to the system's main face buttons make the game significantly more enjoyable. And it was already very impressive to begin with; not only does Snake Eater 3D have remarkably deep gameplay and an incredible story, but it's one of the best-looking titles on Nintendo 3DS. If you play M-rated games, this one is not to be missed. —CHRIS H.

Wii

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
The Adventures of Tintin: The Game	5.5	Ubisoft	275	E10+
Back to the Future: The Game	6.5	Telltale	273	T
Bit.Trip Complete	9.0	Aksys	271	E

MORE ON:

BRAVE: THE VIDEO GAME

I enjoyed the film *Brave* a lot more than most of the movie critics did, so I was curious to give the game a try. I spent some time playing the multiplayer mode with Justin when he was working on his review, and I came away extremely disappointed. The multi-element combat system is interesting but poorly implemented. The muddy graphics are also a turn-off, especially considering that I could barely make out my character–one of the tiny Will O' The Wisps–when the action became heated. —PHIL T.

Brave: The Video Game	5.0	Disney	280	E10+
Captain America: Super Soldier	5.5	Sega	270	T
Cartoon Network Punch Time Explosion XL	6.0	Crave	274	E10+
Centipede: Infestation	6.5	Atari	273	E10+
Disney Universe	4.5	Disney	273	E10+
Driver San Francisco	4.5	Ubisoft	271	T
Epic Mickey	8.5	Disney	263	E
FIFA Soccer 12	8.0	EA Sports	272	E
Fishing Resort	7.5	Xseed	273	E
Fortune Street	7.5	Nintendo	274	E
Go Vacation	7.0	Namco Bandai	273	E10+
Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters	4.0	Warner Bros.	270	E10+
Kirby's Return to Dream Land	8.5	Nintendo	272	E10+
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7	7.0	Warner Bros.	274	E10+
The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword	9.5	Nintendo	274	E10+
Lost In Shadow	8.0	Hudson	263	E10+
Madden NFL 12	7.0	Electronic Arts	271	E
Major League Baseball 2K12	2.5	2K Sports	277	E
Mario & Sonic at the London 2012 Olympic Games	7.0	Sega	273	E
Mario Party 9	8.0	Nintendo	276	E
Mario Sports Mix	8.0	Nintendo	264	E
PokéPark 2: Wonders Beyond	5.5	Nintendo	276	E
Rayman Origins	9.5	Ubisoft	273	E10+
Rhythm Heaven Fever	8.0	Nintendo	276	E
Rune Factory: Tides of Destiny	8.0	Natsume	272	E10+
Skylanders: Spyro's Adventure	7.0	Activision	273	E10+
Spider-Man: Edge of Time	7.0	Activision	273	T
Super Mario All-Stars	9.0	Nintendo	263	E
Transformers: Dark of the Moon–Stealth Force Edition	3.0	Activision	270	E10+
TRON: Evolution–Battle Grids	6.5	Disney	263	E10+
Worms: Battle Islands	7.0	THQ	264	E10+
WWE '12	6.5	THQ	274	T
X-Men Destiny	2.5	Activision	273	T
Xenoblade Chronicles	9.0	Nintendo	277	T

Nintendo DS

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Aliens: Infestation	8.0	Sega	272	T
ATV Wild Ride	7.0	Destineer	264	E
Bejeweled 3	8.5	PopCap	274	E
Camping Mama: Outdoor Adventures	5.0	Majesco	271	E
Captain America: Super Soldier	3.5	Sega	270	E10+
de Blob 2	8.0	THQ	265	E
Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Revelation	7.5	Nintendo	265	T
Dragon Quest Monsters: Joker 2	7.5	Nintendo	271	E
Fossil Fighters: Champions	8.0	Nintendo	273	E
Ghost Trick: Phantom Detective	9.0	Capcom	263	T
Giana Sisters DS	9.0	Destineer	265	E
Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters	3.5	Warner Bros.	270	E10+
Harvest Moon: The Tale of Two Towns DS	8.0	Natsume	272	E
Kingdom Hearts Re:coded	8.0	Square Enix	263	E10+
Kirby Mass Attack	8.0	Nintendo	271	E
Naruto Shippuden: Shinobi Rumble	6.0	Tomy	264	T
Plants vs. Zombies	9.0	PopCap	264	E10+
Pokémon Conquest	9.0	Nintendo	279	E
Professor Layton and the Last Specter	8.5	Nintendo	272	E10+
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor 2	8.0	Atlus	276	T
Solatorobo: Red the Hunter	9.0	Xseed	271	E10+
Spider-Man: Edge of Time	5.0	Activision	273	E10+
Transformers: Dark of the Moon–Autobots/Decepticons	3.0	Activision	270	E10+
TRON: Evolution	6.5	Disney	263	E10+
X-Men Destiny	2.0	Activision	273	E10+

MORE ON:

FIRE EMBLEM: SHADOW DRAGON

When I heard that Nintendo had announced a Fire Emblem game for Nintendo 3DS, I was inspired to give the grid-based strategy series a try. Shadow Dragon's tactical battle system is simple and addictive, but I was surprised to find that party members disappear for good when they're slain in battle. However, it really gives you an incentive to play strategically, as it's easy to grow attached to characters involved in the storyline. —CODY M.

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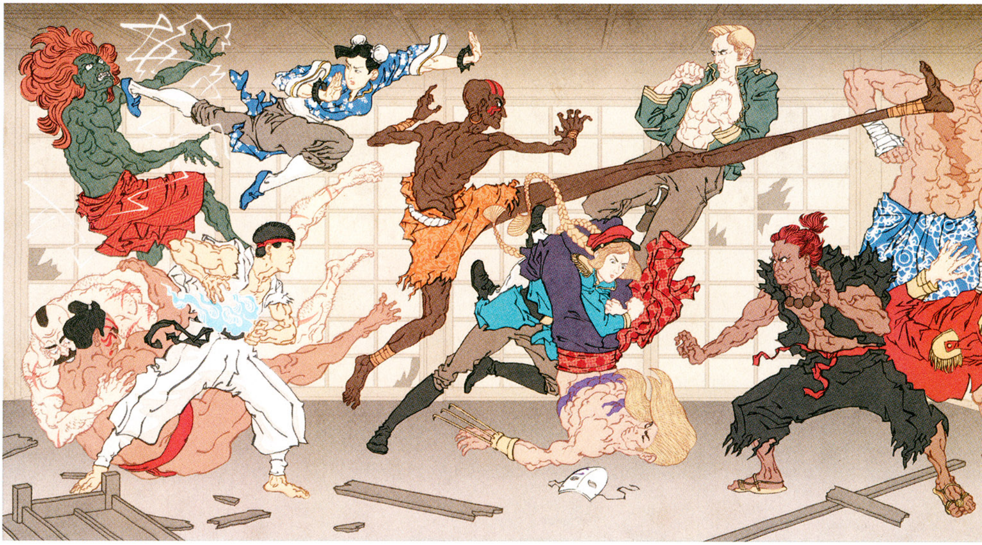


FANDOM

Samurai Style

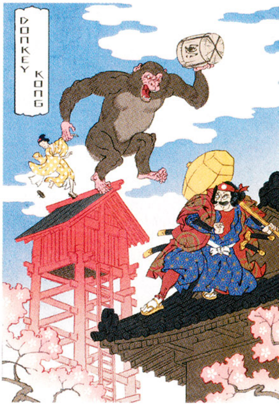
One man's quest to wildly reimagine our favorite gaming heroes

JED HENRY is a Utah man with a very particular, peculiar, and impressive plan: he intends to spend the next year re-creating Nintendo characters in traditional Japanese *ukiyo-e* style—that of the 17th-century woodblock prints depicting epic battles, knee-weakening vistas, and mythical creatures.

"I've always loved Japanese prints, and while obsessing over them one day, I realized that they look a lot like video games," explained Henry. "Japanese printmakers...were selling entertainment."

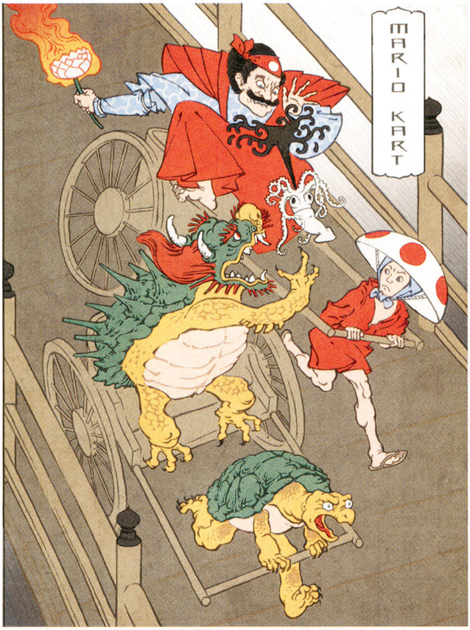
And if Henry's prints can be summed up in one word, *entertaining* is certainly it. He's done Samus, Mega Man, Link, and many Street Fighter characters in this style, and it's not something Henry takes lightly. "Each image is the result of dozens of hours of research," said Henry. "I want to be sure that every part of an image looks just like a traditional *ukiyo-e*. Obviously I can't reproduce the style perfectly, but I try to get as close as possible."

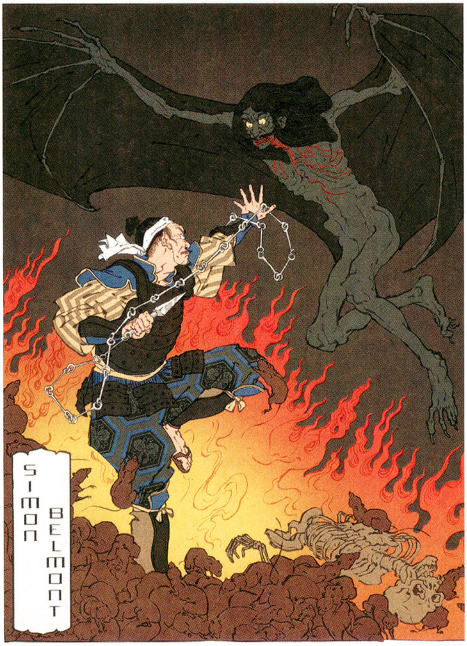
After he's done researching, Henry sketches everything out in Photoshop, prints out that drawing on a 130-percent scale, and then draws in the final lines with a traditional Japanese brush. He then scans that back in and finishes everything digitally, implementing textures that he's scanned, as well.



So what's next for Henry? Kirby, Star Fox, Final Fantasy VI, Chrono Trigger, and Secret of Mana. After that, who knows? "[After a year, it'd] result in about 50 images, which is just about the right amount to fill an art book," said Henry. "Wouldn't that be fun?" Yes, it would be! Check out jedart.blogspot.com to see more.

—DAVID W.




SIMON BELMONT

TAKE *your best* SHOT

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SEND YOUR PICS TO photos@nintendopower.com.

Use your Nintendo DSi or Nintendo 3DS system to snap a fun, gaming-related photo that matches this month's theme, then transfer the image to a computer using an SD card reader and e-mail it to the above address. We'll print the best ones.

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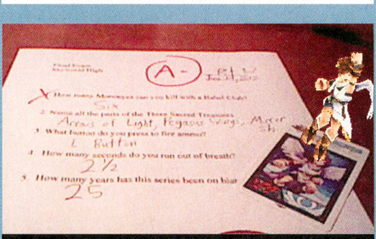
VOLUME 279'S THEME: FINAL EXAMS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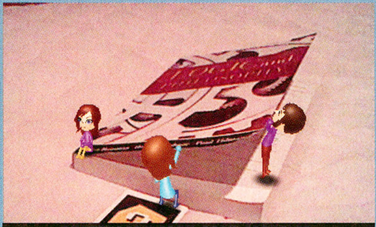
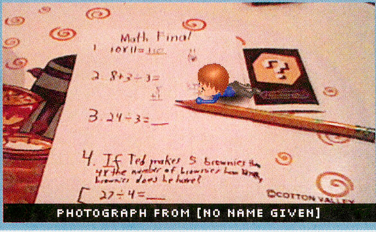
PHOTOGRAPH FROM RICHARD H.



PHOTOGRAPH FROM EGON SPENGLER


Math Final
1. 10×11=110
2. 8+3−3=
3. 24÷3=__
4. If Ted makes 5 brownies
27÷4=__
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PHOTOGRAPH FROM [NO NAME GIVEN]

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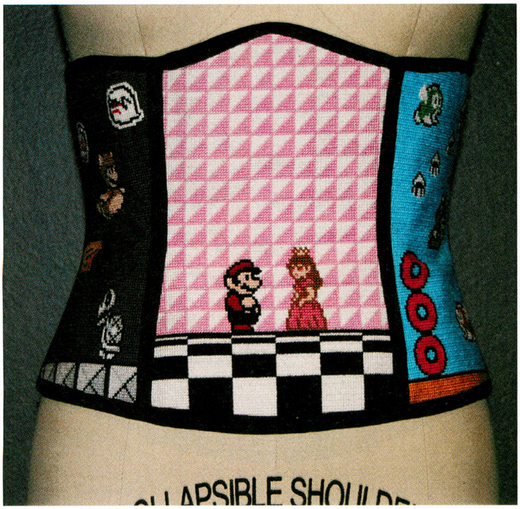


FANDOM

Super Bound Bros.

This Mario corset squeezes with style.

MARIO MAY not be known for having an hourglass figure, but he's helping others slim down in style thanks to the imagination of Monica McFarland, 28, of Phoenix, Arizona, who cross-stitched her favorite scenes from Super Mario Bros. 3 into this incredible handmade corset. The mustachioed plumber has popped up in some crazy places over the years, but this is the first time we've seen him woven into the fabric of quasi-intimate apparel.

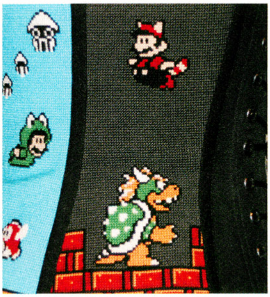
McFarland has been making custom corsets for about 10 years now, and she turned to creating her own designs after growing tired of the limited fabric selection available at local stores. Being a longtime gamer and Nintendo fan, incorporating Mario into the design seemed a natural fit for her.

Inspired by a friend's Mario-themed cross-stitch art project, she decided to run with a similar idea for one of her corsets, only on a larger scale. "I chose to use the theme of Super Mario Bros. 3 because that is such an iconic game, and it has so many classic characters," she explains. "I started with picking five of my favorite Mario suits so I could feature one on each panel."

Creating a pattern, tracking down Mario sprites to uses as guides, cross-stitching each panel, figuring out how to best arrange it, and then putting the whole thing together was a time-consuming process that she worked at off and on for close to year, and her effort really shows.

"At the time I had finished cross-stitching the panels, I told myself that I would never make one of these again," McFarland recalls. "I even started to develop 'tennis elbow' at one point. But after seeing the final product, I couldn't wait to start another corset."

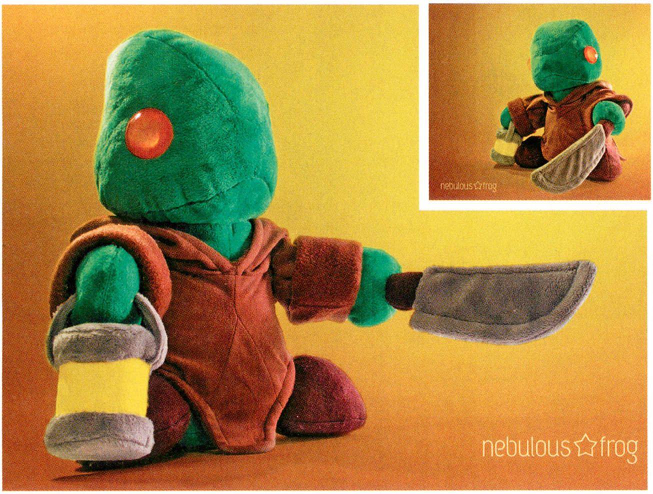
A glutton for punishment, she already has fielded requests for Donkey Kong- and Legend of Zelda-themed corsets and is experimenting with different patterns. —**NATHAN M.**



FANDOM

Hunk O' Tonberry Love

The heroes of Final Fantasy don't need to run from this guy.



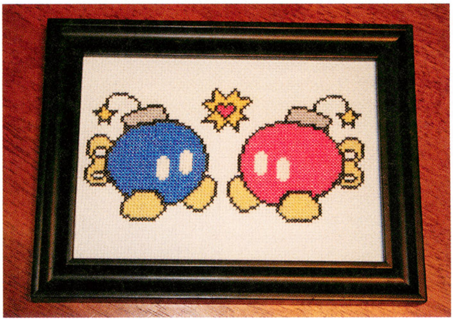
IT'S UNUSUAL to see a Tonberry and want to snuggle up to it, but Brittany Urquhart of Irving, Texas, has crafted a plushie version of the fearsome Final Fantasy baddie just crying out for your love and affection. Over a couple of months, Urquhart, a longtime crafter, made this as a birthday gift using Minky fabric, felt, blizzard fleece, "some kind of suede," and half of an empty toilet-paper roll embedded in the lamp to "keep it smooth and round."

In the games, Tonberries are weak-looking creatures that can ambush your party. They seem harmless, but they shrug off massive HP drains like they were mosquito bites. Urquhart confesses to a slight paranoia when she was making her Tonberry: "Every time I looked up, it had somehow managed to position itself to stare right at me with its knife poised!" The knife poses no real threat—it simply has foam in it for rigidity—but nonetheless, maybe it's just as well Urquhart gave away the Tonberry! **—DAVID W.**

FANDOM

Sympathy for the Bob-Omb

This cross-stitch piece makes sparks fly.

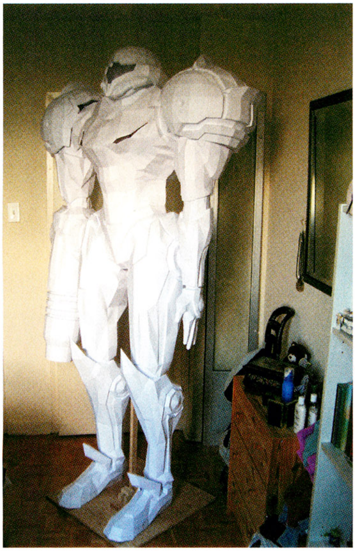


IN MARIO GAMES, you aren't supposed to feel bad for the bad guys. Well, Elizabeth Wintzer of Boynton Beach, Florida, was so moved by the Bob-Ombs' plight and short lifespan that she preserved the memory of a lucky one's courtship with Bombette, the gorgeous pink bombshell from Paper Mario.

"Bob-Omb was always my favorite Mario character," explains Wintzer. "I feel so bad for him, always getting kicked around and blown up. And he is just so cute! It made me so happy for Bob-Omb to finally get a chance at love. Their love is explosive!"

Wintzer sees herself as a torchbearer for cross-stitch, which her mom taught her, and feels that it can appeal to people of all ages. "No more flowery old-lady stitches!" she jokes.

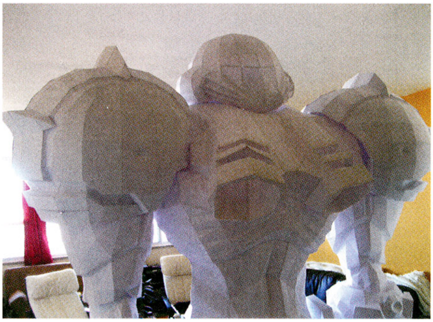
And Wintzer thinks this piece battles another misconception: that Bob-Omb is a bad guy. "He's just misunderstood," she insists. "He can't help that he blows things up; it's just his genetics. He's just trying to hang out and make friends with Mario, but gets kicked away, and then, boom, he's gone! It's really quite sad." Maybe so, but at least Wintzer was able to let a Bob-Omb experience true love before blasting into oblivion. **—DAVID W.**



FANDOM

Paper Pirate-Hunter

It might not keep Samus safe, but this papercraft armor looks amazing.



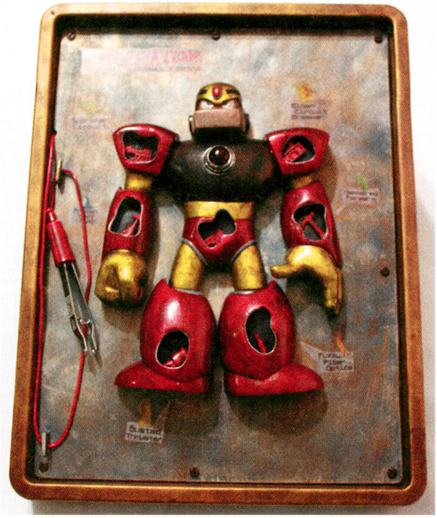
THIS 82-INCH-TALL behemoth—one of the most impressive papercraft creations and real-life renderings of Samus Aran we've ever seen—comes to us from Matthew Green, a PhD student in Toronto, Ontario, who studies theology, spirituality, and psychology. We can get a sense of his spirit just from seeing the immense work put into this re-creation of Samus's armor—based on the character model from Metroid Prime 2: Echoes—but as for why he embarked on such a massive undertaking? "I have pondered hard to determine the answer," he admits. "And I think the truth is, to see if I could."

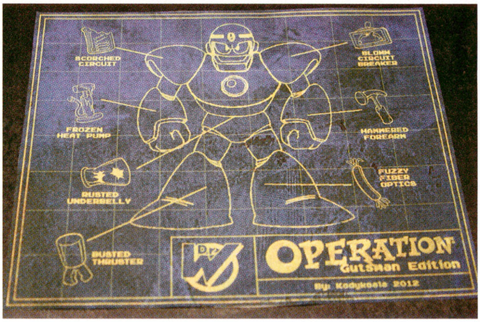
Green notes that the entire project spanned about seven months, during which he'd take a full day here and there to work on the torso, or spend a few nights working on Arm Cannon details. It all started when he came across the data for the original 3D game model, and then employed a program called Pepakura Designer to translate it into templates for paper models. "Just for fun, I printed the helmet parts and started assembling," he explains, "and then once I started, I guess it seemed a shame to stop."

He spent hours assembling the various pieces on his computer, but that's nothing compared to the time expended printing out hundreds of sheets of paper, cutting them to size, and then piecing everything together. "I'd cut out pieces and glue them one by one to what was already finished," says Green. "My wife became rather disturbed by the various loose body parts lying around the apartment, so I had to start finding hiding places. The helmet was fine on my desk, but the torso had to hang in my closet, the arms and cannon on closet shelves, the shoulders tucked behind the linens, and so on."

Green had been making papercraft models for only a few months prior to starting this project, including a gear-driven walking AT-AT from *Star Wars*, and he wasn't fully prepared for the scale of the armor—something that became apparent when he needed to construct an internal frame for the partially complete model. "It looked like it would actually hold up well on its own, but once the cannon was attached—which is absurdly heavy for a bunch of paper—it started twisting the lower back completely out of shape! I guess even Samus Aran gets lower-back problems," he quips. Ultimately, he ran a wooden pole from the base through the body, which he concedes isn't ideal, but it's a much better solution than letting his hard work fall to pieces.

In the end, the completed model comprises 239 sheets of paper—not including discarded ones—and the armor looks fantastic, perfectly capturing the essence of the suit without a need for paint. Within days of posting photos of his handiwork online, Green's Flickr page earned more than 75,000 views, and since then a local artist has asked for the suit to be included in an upcoming gallery installation—"a fact that continually bewilders me," Green adds. As far as we're concerned, this is some *fine* art indeed. —**ANDREW H.**





FANDOM

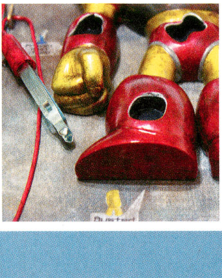
A Gutsy Operation

The classic board game gets a fantastic custom Mega makeover.

GUTS MAN may not have quite the profile of Mega Man, Zero, or some of the many other characters created for Capcom's beloved action series over the years, but he's the star in this fantastic custom Operation game board. The fully functional game lets you pull parts from Guts Man's robotic body and even feel the trademark buzz when you accidentally brush up along the edges. The board is incredibly well designed, looking like a real licensed product.

The creation comes to us from Donald Kennedy, a 32-year-old electrical engineer who doubles as a custom-toy maestro in his spare time. Last year he designed a trio of light-up, old-timey boardwalk cabinets starring Elec Man, Mario, and Wario, which we highlighted in Vol. 274. But the Operation board may be his most impressive and elaborate creation to date, thanks to the detailed artwork and packaging, not to mention the fact that the custom version is as playable as an off-the-shelf board.

Kennedy says he plotted out the project for years, sketching ideas until he was ready to take on the gargantuan task. His goal was to one-up Hasbro's standard edition of the board game, which features an aluminum sheet with a printed overlay and holes cut out of both. "I have always found this to be kind of cheap," he asserts. "I wanted to do something that was a little more elaborate."

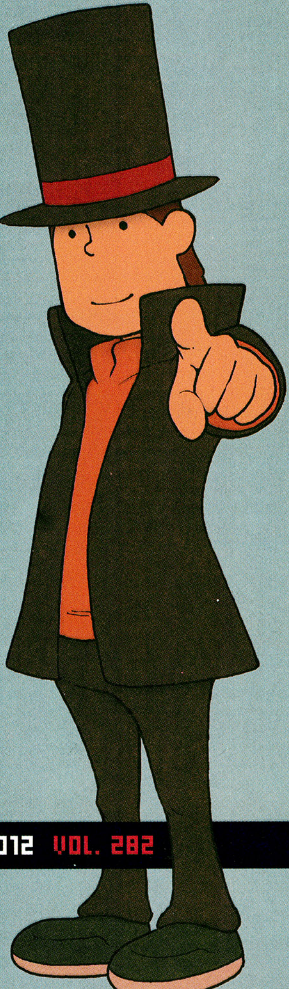


He started with an official Iron Man edition of Operation produced for the recent films, since the robotic pieces matched up well with his intended patient, and then cut an existing Guts Man action figure in two, discarding the back half so the front could lay flat on the board. From there, the most difficult part began: cutting precise holes into Guts Man's body for players to pull pieces from, as Kennedy needed to maintain both form and function to create a believable board.

Painting also played a significant role in achieving the look, as the original Guts Man figure was colorful and cartoonish, while the one seen on the plastic operating table appears metallic and battle-worn—just as you'd expect from a sentient robot that needs a little repair work. Kennedy capped off the project by custom-designing the instructions, money, game cards, and packaging in Adobe Photoshop, even going so far as to use coffee and a hair dryer to make the pieces appear aged. All told, the complete package took about 40 hours to assemble.

Kennedy's first board-game project is a smashing success, and it's unlikely to be his last: he hints that a future undertaking will likely use Hungry Hungry Hippos as a base, which has us contemplating all of the potential options—Chain Chomps, maybe? Whatever the case, his creations consistently impress, as does his work ethic. "I love trying new things and growing as a customizer," he notes. "Sometimes it is a pain to do something new, but the end result is worth it and I learn so much from it. I just hope that I can keep coming up with new and interesting ideas."

—ANDREW H.



SEPTEMBER 2012 VOL. 282

NEXT MONTH

Professor Layton is back and he's on the Nintendo 3DS! We lift up the top hat to discover the secrets of Professor Layton and the Miracle Mask! And that's not all—we'll also return to the Unova region for a detailed look at Pokémon Black Version 2 and Pokémon White Version 2, give the verdict on New Super Mario Bros. 2, and more!

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